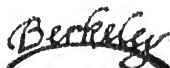
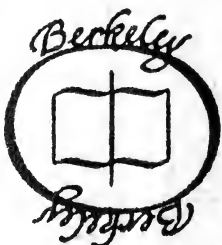
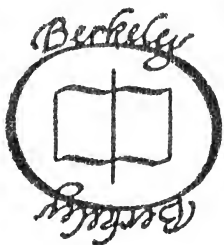
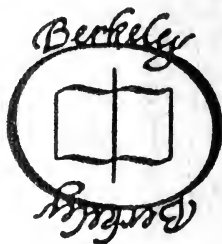
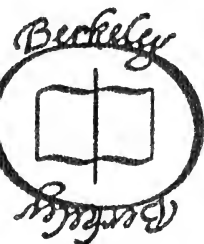
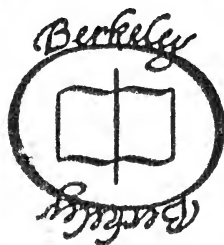
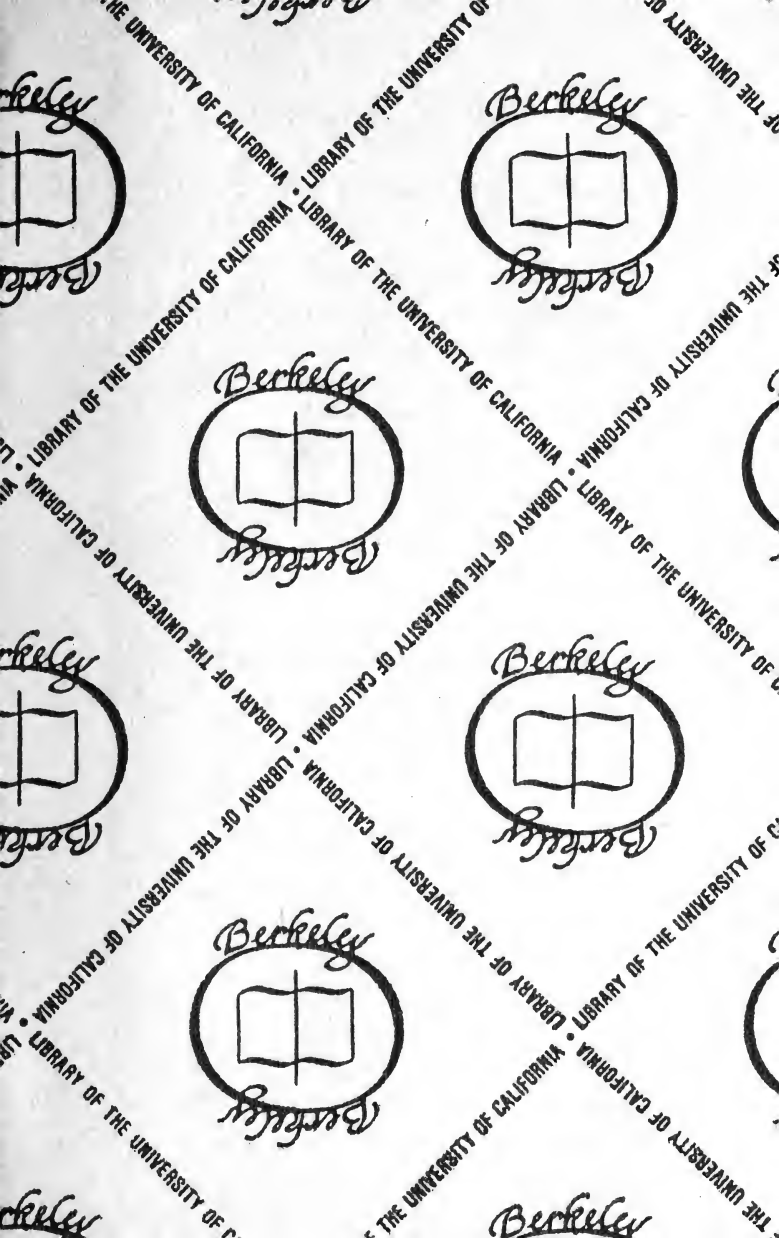


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INISFAIL

A LYRICAL CHRONICLE OF IRELAND

~~THE IRISH SISTERS
EARLY POEMS, MEDITATIVE OR DEVOTIONAL
POEMS FOR THE MOST PART CONNECTED WITH THE
GREAT IRISH FAMINE, 1846—1849
URBS ROMA
ST. PETER'S CHAINS~~

BY

AUBREY DE VERE

NEW EDITION

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED.

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1897

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INISFAIL.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1861,

PREFACE.

(EDITION OF 1877.)

'INISFAIL' is an attempt to represent, as in a picture, the most stormy, but the most poetic period of Irish History. In simpler days than ours, when even rude feelings were tender, and when thought had not separated itself from action, poetry and history were more akin than they have been in recent times. In England and in Spain a series of ballads had early grown up, out of which rose the later literature of each country, ballads that recorded many a precious passage of old times, and embodied the genius, as well as the manners, of the past. Irish History no longer stands thus related to letters. Nowhere in Ireland can we move without being challenged by the monuments of the past; yet, for many of her sons, and those who ought to be the best instructed, and for the traveller from afar, there exists no Alfred, and no Wallace. For the English-speaking part of the population nearly the whole of the old bardic literature has perished, and with it much of a history admirable for the manner in which it exhibits

the finer, together with the more barbaric, traits of a society the spiritual civilisation of which had been early developed, and the civil early checked. Yet for centuries the bards occupied a more important position in Ireland than in any other part of the West: their dignity was next to the regal; their influence over the people unbounded; and they possessed all the secular learning then in the land. The Gael required that even the precepts of the law should be delivered to him in verse, as well as that the lines of the Princes and Chiefs should be thus traced. The influence of the priest alone equalled that of the bard, and between these two orders a rivalry often existed. We have the testimony of Spenser as to the merit and power of the latter as late as the sixteenth century. He admired them and he feared them. The love of the bard for his country was a lover's passion. To him of course his Erin was in some degree an Ideal Erin. He could see the crimes of individuals, and denounce judgment on them; but beneath the accidents of the hour he ever recognised in his Land the child of a divine predilection. The closer the hunters beset her, the more thickly the 'winged wounds' came about her, the more vehemently he hailed her as one 'doomed to death, yet fated not to die.' The name 'Inisfail' signified the 'Isle of Destiny.'

In Ireland the alliance between poetry and love of country was, perhaps, closer than elsewhere. For ages her History was but a record of calamity; and to every generous nature his country becomes endeared by her sufferings. But even in earlier days the bards must have found their best subjects for song among the picturesque and romantic details of Irish story. The antiquity to which it mounted

excited imaginative sympathies: the dimness with which large tracts of it were invested gave a more striking prominence to what remained of it—those great, half-isolated Records which loomed through the mist like mountain behind mountain retiring into more and more remote distance. Some reference to those records, wild as the wildest ‘Irish airs,’ may perhaps render more easily intelligible an enterprise of verse which many will deem rash, an attempt to add a Gaelic note to that large concert of English poetry enriched long since by strains indirectly drawn from almost every age and land.

Long before those three golden centuries succeeding her conversion to Christianity, Ireland possessed culture, laws, and a time-honoured monarchy. It was in part for this reason that she at once became the great missionary land of the North, while foreigners flocked in crowds to her colleges. Her Faith was a tree that rapidly ‘covered the lands with its branches,’ because it had been planted ‘by the water side.’ If Ireland had to ‘wait long for her martyrs,’ it was because the genius of her early institutions was less opposed than that of other Western Nations to Christianity. Most of Europe, including Britain and Gaul, had received the Roman civilisation. With Pagan Rome Ireland had had no dealings, closely as she became linked with Christian Rome. She was an Eastern nation in the West, and a Southern in the North. Her civilisation was patriarchal, not military, in essence; its type was the family, not the army; it had more affinity with the Church, when the Church yet dwelt in tents, than with the complex fabric of the State. It was a civilisation of clans. The clan system would have

been fatal to a people whose vocation was to create a great political dominion. To a country whose greatness was destined to be a missionary greatness it proved an auxiliary, at once affording to her the type of those spiritual clans, her convents, of which those ruled by the great monastic family of St. Columba proved the most potent, and also withdrawing her from the larger worldly ambitions. Had the clan system met with no external interference, civil society might possibly in Ireland, as in India, have preserved its original type substantially unchanged to modern times, without decay, though also without progress. But, on the other hand, the missionary progress of Ireland in three centuries, exceeded that made by half the countries of Europe in twice the time. Clan fights were her sports ; but Religion was her Reality. To it her genius was attracted. Another Eastern characteristic, 'Fatalism,' has been attributed to the Irish race. Her Fatalism meant simply a profound sense of Religion. The intense Theism which has ever belonged to the East survived in Ireland as an instinct no less than as a Faith. The Irish have commonly found it more easy to recognise the Divine hand than secondary causes. They have regarded Religion as the chief possession of man. Such nations are ever attached to the Past.

That Past was indeed too great a thing to be forgotten. Even in our own days, remote and prosaic, by the banks of the Boyne, amid more troubled memorials, we stand and wonder at tumuli the winding galleries of which are supposed to retain the ashes of those kings of the Tuatha de Danann, who ruled in Ireland before the Milesian race. In the isles of Aran, in Kerry, and in Donegal, we still find the

remains of cairn and cromlech and rath, of stone forts, and of those singular houses called 'cloghauns' with their steep beehive roofs. The Royal Irish Academy shows us its silver shields, golden crowns, cups, torques, spear-heads of bronze, &c. The illuminated Missals and Breviaries of the Dublin University prove to us that no sooner had the land become Christian than it applied to sacred purposes the skill it had long before possessed. Centuries earlier, when the neighbouring countries were barbarous, its Brehon Laws had constituted a complete code of civil rule ; while many of its social usages, fosterage, for instance, and the clan tenure of land, hereditary offices, eric, &c., were as deeply rooted in the national heart, as when, 1500 years later, arbitrary laws endeavoured in vain to eradicate them. The long list of 118 kings, previous to the time of St. Patrick, astonishes us at first ; but, on examining the material records still existing, we find abundant proofs of the antiquity of Irish civilisation. The traces of the husbandman's labour remain on the summit of hills which have not been cultivated within the records of tradition, and the implements with which he toiled have been found in the depth of forest or bog.

If the ancient memorials of Ireland are interesting to us, much more so must they have proved to the Irish of an earlier day. A green and woody knoll beside Lough Derg is all that for us remains of Kin-cora, the Palace of the Munster Kings, and home of Brian the Great. But to a Gael in the fifteenth century its ruins must have spoken a language as intelligible as that in which old castles battered by Mountjoy address us. To the Irishman, prince or peasant, Nial of the Nine Hostages was as familiar

a name as Bruce was to the Scottish. Bard and chronicler told how, before St. Patrick had summoned King Laeghaire to believe, Nial had ruled over all Ireland; how he had been the ancestor of the tribe of Hi-Nial, from which were descended the Princes of Tirconnel and Tyrone, at whose name the children of Norman nobles in the *Pale*, the four counties round Dublin, trembled; how he had sent against Britain and Gaul those naval expeditions, still for us recorded in Roman verse;* how he had leagued with his countrymen in Scotland, those Scoti who with the Picts had again and again driven back the Romans behind their further wall till they left the land defenceless; and how, at last, he had fallen at sea, in the port of Boulogne, by the hand of his rival, Eochy. From priest as well as bard he would have heard of the Irish Numa, King Cormac; how he had succeeded to his father, A.D. 227; how he had established three colleges, one for war, one for history, and one for jurisprudence; how he had reduced the old Brehon law into a code; how he had assembled at his palace of Tara his bards and chroniclers, and commanded them to collect all the ancient annals of Ireland into a series—the ‘Psalter of Tara’; how he had himself written a book called ‘The Institutions of a Prince,’ and stored in it the civil wisdom of his time; how, in obedience to law, he had resigned his throne on becoming disfigured by a wound; and how it was piously believed that, before his death, Christianity had reached him, and he had become a Believer.

‘Totam cum Scotus Iernem
Movit, et infesto spumavit remige Tethys.’

CLAUDIAN.

Still more often would he have heard the tale of King Cormac's grandfather, Conn of the Hundred Fights, who succeeded to the crown of all Ireland, A.D. 123, and who was at last compelled to surrender one half of it to Eoghan More (Eugene the Great), King of Munster. He would have heard how the latter, on the war breaking out again, had sought and found allies in Spain, and with them had perished in a night surprise; how his rival, Conn of the Hundred Fights, was slain, in the hundredth year of his age, by a king of Ulster; and how from a king who united the blood of Conn and of Eugene were descended the great houses of Munster, those of the Dalcassian race, as the OBriens, who held sway in Thomond or north Munster, and those of the Eugonian race, as the MacCarthys, who retained it for so many centuries in Desmond or south Munster, and were at last obliged to share it with the Norman Geraldines.

But the records of which every song-loving Gael heard went up to periods long before the Christian Era. He heard how, at a time when the bards had long enjoyed the dignities in Christian times bestowed on the clergy, a storm had arisen against this song-church, accused of inordinate wealth and abused power. He heard also how it had been saved by the interposition of St. Columba, himself a Poet. He heard how, earlier still, King Eochy had constituted the five provincial kingdoms, as centuries previously King Ugony More had divided Ireland into twenty-five for the benefit of his twenty-five sons, compelling his people to swear by the 'sun and the moon, the dew, and all elements visible and invisible,' that their inheritance should not be taken from them for ever.

He heard how Emania, the palace of the Ulster kings, had been built, before the time of Ugony, B.C. 305, by Queen Macha, who had compelled rival princes to toil at the foundations, and marked with the point of her torque the spot where the work was to begin. The annalist of Clonmacnoise told him how for 850 years the Red-branch Knights, the great order of Pagan Chivalry, had gone in and come out among its halls; how another Queen, Maeve, or Maude, who had herself built the Connaught Palace of Cruachan, invaded Ulster at the head of her army; how her Gamanradians of Iorras had fought with the Red-branch Chivalry; and how, centuries later, the three Collas had burned to the ground that Emania of which the only record remaining was then, as it is now, a lonely rath near Armagh. The chronicler would then have told him that the palace of Tara had been built by King Ollamh Fodhla centuries before even that of Emania had been heard of; that in it, reign after reign, was held the great Triennial Assembly of chiefs, bards, and historians; that each warrior had taken the seat appointed for him beneath his own banner, during deliberations conducted with a solemnity half regal, half sacerdotal; that these assemblies continued to take place till A.D. 554, and that it was deserted for ever in consequence of a malison pronounced against it by St. Rodanus of Lothra. Emania had enjoyed more years of splendour than had elapsed between the first Danish invasion and Queen Elizabeth's wars; yet its greatness was over before Ireland had confessed the Christian Faith. Tara had lasted longer than the whole period of Danish, Norman, and Saxon wars united; yet the weeds had begun to creep over its

old rath as many centuries before Henry II. had landed in Ireland as elapsed between his enterprise and what in Ireland was called the 'Anglo-Dutch invasion.'

Glancing thus with the bards from epoch to epoch, we reach the latest of the remote ones, that of the Milesian settlement. The most learned amongst recent antiquarians assure us that a sceptical spirit respecting that settlement is as unphilosophical as a credulous spirit would have been deemed in the last century. They affirm that the whole social system of Ireland having been based upon genealogical claims, her most important institutions were formed for the purpose of recording facts and dates accurately; and they state that the early chronicles are remarkably confirmed by Science as regards eclipses, astronomical calculations, &c. It is certain that the Gael ever looked upon this period as the authentic beginning of Irish glories, however problematical her earlier legends might be. Rejecting the claims to a greater antiquity, Charles O'Connor, of Balenagar, assigns to the establishment of the Milesian monarchy in Ireland the date of 760 years before our Era, making it thus nearly contemporaneous with the foundation of Rome. A race called Gadelian, or Gaelic, and at a later period called Scoti (as is supposed from their claims to a *Scythian* descent), migrated to Ireland from Spain under the leadership of the six sons of Milesius, king of that country. Their names were Heber, Heremon, Donn, Colpa, Ir, and Amergin. The brothers founded that Gaelic monarchy which had lasted for nearly 2000 years when the mighty Norman race extended its conquests from England to Ireland, a land the political and religious institu-

tions of which had never wholly recovered the effects of the Danish inroads.

It is with the Norman conquests in Ireland that the present Poem commences. It is necessary to make a few remarks respecting the chief characteristics of Irish History from that period to the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The six centuries of Irish History, illustrated by 'INISFAIL,' divide themselves into three portions. The first endured for about 350 years. Its predominant characteristic was Outlawry. The Brehon Law was set aside by the conquering race, and the English Law was refused to the conquered, refused by the settler more than by English kings. The weak were the prey of the strong. Yet even in those ages of wrong and rapine all was not suffering. Flowers spring up by the torrent's bed ; and many a gay song was sung beneath the invader's fortress. Moreover, in the midst of the Norman settlements the Gaelic chief held his own, and around him the old clan life went on as before. Partly through intermarriages, the Norman nobles, in the remoter parts of Ireland, became Irish Chiefs, speaking the national language, and adopting the national usages. It is thus that Keating, writing his history amid the storms of the seventeenth century, speaks of this race : 'Notwithstanding what has been said of the cruelties and sacrilegious acts of some of those foreigners who came into Ireland, many of them were men of virtue and strict piety, who promoted the service of God and the cause of religion by erecting churches and monasteries, and bestowing large

revenues upon them for their support; and God rewarded their charity and acts of mercy with particular marks of His favour, and not only blessed them in their own persons, but in a noble and worthy posterity.' Their gradual amalgamation with the nation at large is a pledge that no estrangement of race or class among Ireland's sons can be permanent.

The second period is characterised by the wars of Religion. They completed the estrangement between England and Ireland. They completed also the union of the Gaelic and Norman races in Ireland. When the last great act of the tragedy had come, at the same side the ancient foes fought and fell. The Cromwellian victories, and the confiscation of more than half Ireland at that time, reduced with comparatively few exceptions the chiefs of both the old races to that condition to which the Geraldines of Desmond had previously been brought by the confiscations of Elizabeth, and the Ulster princes by those of James I. This period ends with the dethronement of James II., when the fall of the old Monarchy consummated that of the old Nobility and the old Faith.

The third period is that of Penal Laws, *silently endured. A succession of wars, renewed during centuries with recurrent passion, in defence of ancient laws, national existence, and religious freedom, had remained barren of their intended result. Foreign alliances, even during periods when England was torn by dynastic and religious dissensions, had always proved abortive. The struggle had but rendered Ireland famous among the nations, and scattered among them her warriors, as her missionaries had been scattered in old times. Wrong had

run its complete circle. But the People *endured*. The Faith for which it had suffered preserved it as an integral People. The chains which had never been broken fell off. A more glorious triumph than that so often sought had been reserved for Ireland. It was awarded, not to a fortunate moment, but to silent years ; not to nobles, but to a people—among whom, however, many tempests had sown wide the seed of nobility ; not to spasmodic action, but to inflexible fortitude ; not to arms, but to Faith. When the cloud had rolled by there emerged a People and a Religion.

Persons of the most different prepossessions have arrived at practically the same estimate of Irish History, and in it have thus found the moral of the tale.

The Catholic sees in Ireland an image of the Church herself—for three early centuries the great missionary of the Faith ; for three late ones its martyr ; ever in tribulation, but never consumed ; at one time exalted as a nation, at another deposed from nationhood but to become more powerful as a race, and effecting more in its captivities and dispersions than it could have done if oppression, and the poverty bequeathed by oppression, had never driven it to the margin of waters broader and more lonely than those of Euphrates or Choaspes. To one of a different creed a conclusion morally the same is differently coloured. Justice, he says, ultimately triumphs over wrong. Liberty cannot be trampled down for ever. A Religion is a Cause : and a Cause and a People in permanent union are indomitable. The philosopher shapes the result thus :—The relation between the three periods of Irish History is logical. The Outlawry of the first

period rendered it impossible that in the second a new religion should be introduced into Ireland by means of *Law*. Who were to bow before the new laws at variance with the old traditions? Not kernes, who had never had the benefit of law: not Barons, whose only law had been their own will. The struggle but identified for ever the National sentiment with the Catholic sentiment. Equally close appears to him the connection between the second and the third period of Irish History. The Penal Laws of the latter were blunted by the wholesale confiscations of the former. Misery became the pledge for fidelity. To the Irish people, who had already lost their lands, there remained nothing but their Faith. During the long night of persecution its truths shone out like stars, and wrote themselves indelibly on the heart of the race. Its priests were its only friends (a power greater than they sought being thus, but at a later time, forced upon them): the next world was its *nearest* hope: and it was not likely that either would be forsaken. In the end, permanent instincts and principles triumphed over temporary necessities. In the failure of persecuting laws, and in the restoration of Ireland, one man sees the victory of Faith, another that of Justice, and a third that of Reason; three powers that work, on the long run, to the same result.

In these days few are so biassed by party or sectarian bitterness as to grudge an epitaph to virtue and calamity in times gone by. A timid caution may shrink from Historical Studies (as if the most interesting of studies could be suppressed), but a manly prudence will enjoin them, provided that they be conducted with justice. Ireland is bound

to acknowledge that it was not England alone, or Protestant countries alone, that persecuted. On the long run Truth is a peacemaker. What is to be feared from historical studies in connection with Ireland? The spirit of vengeance? A man must be half-witted to sigh for revenge when the offenders have been for centuries dead. He must be an idiot not to perceive that on the long run, whatever a just cause may have gained for a time through the use of unjust means, it has invariably lost ten times as much through injustice.

‘INISFAIL’ may be regarded as a National Chronicle cast in a poetic form. Its aim is to embody the *essence* of a nation’s history during a long period of that History. Contemporary historic poems touch us with a magical hand; but they often pass by the most important events, and linger beside the most trivial. Looking back upon the past as from a vantage-ground, its general proportions become palpable: and the themes to which poetry then attaches herself are either those critical junctures upon which the fortunes of a nation turn, or such accidents of a lighter sort as illustrate the character of a race. A historic series of poems thus becomes possible, the interest of which is continuous, and the course of which reveals an increasing significance. Such a series, however, as it constitutes a Whole, must be read in its proper order if its meaning is to be understood, and if the Unity of the poem is to be felt. The character of Irish History rendered it natural that its illustration should be chiefly lyrical. In this respect I have imitated the example of Ireland’s ancient bards, with whom the Ode or the Dirge was as common as the Ballad was with the

minstrels of other nations. Throughout, I have endeavoured to be true to the inner spirit of Irish History, faithful to its meaning, and no less to its changes. This accounts for the difference of treatment and tone observable in the three Parts of the poem, a difference which corresponds with the three periods of the history recorded. In Part I. the tone is chiefly legendary, and the treatment objective, because the period of Irish History illustrated in it is that which bordered most nearly upon the legends of Ireland's heroic yet half barbaric time. In Part II. the tone becomes more dramatic, the tragic struggle having reached its agony. In Part III. the more impassioned part of the conflict being over, the tone subsides into the elegiac until the end is approached, and the morning perforce glimmers through the night. Fidelity to Irish History rendered no less necessary that recurrence to certain fundamental *ideas* which the reader will observe, as the poem advances, in various degrees of development—such ideas as those of a Providence punishing at once and exalting; the penance of the Norman; the penance of the Gael; the Apostolic mission of Ireland; her undying hope; the fidelity of her sons in far lands, &c. I endeavoured to make the human prevail over the merely political interest of the theme, and to illustrate Ireland's Faith apart from polemics, and exclusively as a Power of Consolation and Strength. A national Chronicle in verse would, if faithful, be an echo of that voice which comes from the heart of a People, and is heard alike in festive hall and in the village circle, in the church-porch, and on the battle-field. That voice has many tones besides the sadder and more solemn—it records the brief pathetic joy

which vanishes like a flame, and the hope perennial like a fountain. The main scope, however, of a poem which illustrates the interior life of a Nation—the biography of a People—must be spiritual. The moral of a brief individual life is often hidden. Nations are patriarchs; and their lives last long enough to vindicate the ways of God.

The chief aim of ‘Inisfail’ was to indicate that sole point of view from which Irish History possesses a meaning. One great Vocation has been guaranteed to Ireland by many great qualifications, and by many great disqualifications. When Religion and Missionary Enterprise ruled the Irish Heart and Hand, Ireland reached the chief greatness she has known within historic times, and the only greatness which has lasted. When the same Heart and Hand return to the same task, Ireland will reap the full harvest of her sorrowful Centuries. She will then also inherit both a Greatness and a Happiness perhaps such as is tendered to her alone among the Nations.

It has been said that Irish History abounds in touching and dramatic details, but that it is essentially fragmentary. Religion imparts completeness to it. When Religion threw off the bonds of centuries, a deliverance precious to all who respect freedom of thought and freedom of conscience, Irish History entered on its consummation, and justice won the most remarkable of her triumphs in modern times. Had it been otherwise, Irish History would have been no theme for song. Most unfit for poetry, however pathetic it may be, is any subject the substance of which is but violence and wrong, and the resultant of which is despondency. Under the tumults with which poetry deals there is ever an

inner voice of peace. Memory—mournful and faithful—has been called by Keble the great Inspirer of Poetry. There is a Hope, the sister of devout Memory, which is its inspirer no less. Such Hope may stand on a tombstone; but her eyes are fixed on heaven; and if her Song begins in dirges it ends in hymns.

A. DE V.



INISFAIL

A LYRICAL CHRONICLE OF IRELAND

In Three Parts

‘A dirge devoutly breathed o’er sorrows past
Tells also of bright calms that shall succeed.’

WORDSWORTH.



To the Memory of
THE FAITHFUL AND THE TRUE;
OF THOSE AMONG THE SONS OF IRELAND
WHO, DURING THE AGES OF HER AFFLICTION,
SUSTAINED A JUST CAUSE
IN THE SPIRIT OF LOYALTY AND LIBERTY,
AND WHO SULLIED THAT CAUSE
BY NO CRIME.



PART I.

Prologue.

THE THREE WOES.

THAT Angel whose charge is Eire sang thus o'er the
dark isle winging :

By a virgin his song was heard at a tempest's
ruinous close :

'Three golden ages God gave while your tender corn-
blade was springing :

Faith's earliest harvest is reap'd. To-day God
sends you Three Woes.

'For ages three, without Laws ye shall flee as beasts
in the forest :

For an age, and a half age, Faith shall bring not
peace but a sword :

Then Laws shall rend you like eagles, sharp-fang'd,
of your scourges the sorest :

When these Three Woes are past, look up, for your
Hope is restored.

'The times of your dole shall be twice the time of
your foregone glory :

But fourfold at last shall lie the grain on your
granary floor :'

The seas in vapour shall fleet, and in ashes the mountains hoary :

Let God do that which He wills. Let His People endure and adore !

THE WARNINGS.

A.D. 1170.

I.

IN the heaven were Portents dire :

On the earth were sign and omen :
Bleeding stars and rain of fire

Dearth and plague foreran the foemen.
Causeless tremors on the crowd
Fell, and strong men wept aloud :
Ere the Northmen cross'd the seas
Said the bards, were signs like these.

II.

Aodh saw at break of day

An oak with blood-beads on its lichen :—
All its branches rushed one way,
Like an army panic-stricken.

Aodh cried, 'I see a host
That flees as one that flies a ghost.'
Mad he died at noon : ere night
The Stranger's sails were up in sight.

III.

Time was given us to repent :

Prophets smote us, plain and city :

But we scorn'd each warning sent,
And outwrestled God's great pity.
'Twixt the blood-stained brother bands
Mitred Laurence raised his hands,
Raised Saint Patrick's cross on high :
We despised him ; and we die.

A BARD SONG.

I.

OUR Kings sat of old in Emania and Tara :
Those new kings whence come they ? Their names
are unknown !
Our Saints lie entomb'd in Ardmagh and Kildara ;
Their relics are healing ; their graves are grass-
grown.
Our princes of old, when their warfare was over,
As pilgrims forth wander'd ; as hermits found rest :
Shall the hand of the stranger their ashes uncover
In Benchor the holy, in Aran the blest ?

II.

Not so,* by the race our Dalriada planted !
In Alba were children ; we sent her a man.

* Innumerable authorities—Irish, English, and Scotch—record that beginning of Scotch, as distinguished from Caledonian, history, the establishment of an Irish colony in Western Scotland, at that time named Alba—a colony from which that noble country derived its later name, the chief part of its population, and its Royal House, from which, through the Stuarts, our present Sovereign is descended. This settlement is recorded by the Venerable Bede.

Battles won in Argyle in Dunedin they chanted ;
 King Kenneth completed what Fergus began.
 Our name is her name : she is Alba no longer :
 Her kings are our blood, and she crowns them at
 Scone ;
 Strong-hearted they are, and strong-handed, but
 stronger
 When throned on our Lia Fail, Destiny's stone.

THE DIRGE OF THE INVADERS;

OR, THE HOUSE NORMAN.

Among the churches sacked and burnt by Dermot and his Norman allies, was that of the Monastery of Kells, to which the headship of the great Order of St. Columba had been transferred several centuries previously, when Iona was wasted by the Danes. The monks are here supposed to have been interrupted, while celebrating the obsequies of their slaughtered brethren, by the return of the despoilers.

I.

THE walls are black : but the floor is red !
 Blood !—there is blood on the convent floor !
 Woe to the mighty : that blood they shed :
 Woe, woe, de Bohun ! Woe, woe, le Poer !
 Fitz-Walter, beware ! the years are strong :
 De Burgh, de Burgh ! God rights the wrong.
 Ye have murder'd priests : the hour draws nigh
 When your sons unshriven, without priest, shall die.

II.

Toll for the Mighty Ones : brethren toll !
 They stand astonish'd ! what seek they here ?

Through tower and through turret the winds on roll,
But the yellow lights shake not around the bier.
They are here unbidden !—stand back, ye proud !
God shapes the empires as wind the cloud.
The offence must come : but the deed is sin :
Toll the death-bell : the death-psalms begin.

III.

The happy Dead with God find rest :
For them no funeral bell we toll.
Fitz-Hugh ! Death sits upon thy crest !
De Clare ! Death sits upon thy soul !
Toll, monks, the death-bell ; toll for them
Who masque under helmet and diadem :
Death's masque is Sin. The living are they
Who live with God in eternal day !

IV.

Fitz-Maurice is sentenced ! Sound, monks, his knell !
As Roderick fell must de Courcy fall.
Toll for Fitz-Gerald the funeral bell :
The blood of O'Ruark is on Lacy's wall.
The lions are ye of the robber kind !
But when ye lie old in your dens and blind
The wolves and the jackals on you shall prey,
From the same shore sent. Beware that day !

V.

Toll for the Conquerors : theirs the doom !
For the great House Norman : its bud is nipt !
Ah, princely House, when your hour is come
Your dirge shall be sung not in church but crypt !

We mourn you in time. A baser scourge
 Than yours that day will forbid the dirge !
 Two thousand years to the Gael God gave :
 Four hundred shall open the Norman's grave !

Thus with threne and with stern lament
 For their brethren dead the old monks made moan
 In the convent of Kells, the first day of Lent,
 One thousand one hundred and seventy-one.

PECCATUM PECCAVIT.

A BARD SONG.

I.

WHERE is thy brother ? Heremon, speak !
 Heber the son of Milesius, thy sire ?
 The orphans' wail and the widow's shriek
 For ever ring on the air of Eire !
 And whose, O whose was the sword, Heremon,
 That smote Amergin, thy brother and bard ?—
 The Fate of thy house or a mocking Demon
 Upheaved thy hand o'er his forehead scarr'd !

II.

Woe, woe to Eire ! That blood of brothers
 Wells up from her bosom renewed each year ;
 'Twas hers the shriek—that desolate Mother's :—
 'Twas Eire that wept o'er that first red bier !

The priest has warn'd, and the bard lamented :
 But warning and wailing her sons despised ;
 The head was sage, and the heart half-sainted ;
 But the sword-hand was evermore unbaptised ! *

THE MALISON.

I.

THE Curse of that land which in ban and in blessing
 Hath puissance through prayer and through
 penance, alight
 On the False One who whisper'd, the Traitor's hand
 pressing,
 'I ride without guards in the morning—good-
 night !'
 O beautiful serpent ! O woman fiend-hearted !
 Wife false to O'Ruark ! † Queen base to thy trust !
 The glory of ages for ever departed
 That hour from the isle of the saintly and just.

* Between the brothers who founded the great Milesian or Gaelic dynasty in Ireland, about B.C. 760, there was strife, as between the brothers who founded Rome nearly at the same date. Heremon and Heber divided Ireland between them. A dispute having arisen between them, a battle was fought at Geashill, in the present King's County, in which Heber fell by his brother's hand. This may be called Ireland's 'Original Sin,' the typical fount of many woes. In the second year of his reign Heremon also slew his brother, Amergin, in battle.

† The story of the Irish Helen is well known. Dervorgil, the wife of O'Ruark, Prince of Breffny, fled with Dermot Mac Murrough, King of Leinster. The latter, on his deposition, went to England, where he contracted alliances with Henry II. and Strongbow against Roderick O'Connor, the last Gaelic king of all Ireland. Dervorgil ultimately found a refuge at Mellifont,

II.

The Curse of that land on the princes disloyal,
Who welcomed the Invader, and knelt at his knee !
False Dermod, false Donald—the chieftains once
royal
Of the Deasies and Ossory, cursed let them be !
Their name and their shame make eternal. Engrave
them
On the cliffs which the great billows buffet and
stain :
Like billows the nations, when tyrants enslave them,
Swell up in their vengeance—not always in vain !

III.

But praise in the churches and worship and honour
To him who, betray'd and deserted, fought on !
All praise to King Roderick, the chief of Clan-
Connor,
The King of all Erin, and Cathall his son !
May the million-voiced chant that in endless expan-
sion
Rolls onward through heaven his praises prolong ;
May the heaven of heavens this night be the mansion
Of the good king who died in the cloisters of
Cong !

where she lived in penance and works of charity. Dermod died at Ferns, under circumstances of strange horror. Exhausted by domestic discords, as well as the calamities of his country, Roderick retired to the monastery he had founded at Cong. He died there at the age of eighty-two, and was interred at Clonmacnoise, the burial-place of the Irish kings.

THE LEGENDS.

A BARD SONG.

I.

THE woods rose slowly ; the clouds sail'd on ;
Man trod not yet the island wide :
A ship drew near from the rising sun ;—
At the helm was the Scythian Parricide.
Battles were lost and battles were won ;
New lakes burst open ; old forests died :
For ages once more in the land was none :
God slew the race of the Parricide.

II.

There is nothing that lasts save the Pine and Bard :
I, Fintan the bard, was living then !
Tall grows the Pine upon Slieve-Donard :
It dies : in the loud harp it lives again.
Give praise to the bard and a huge reward !
Give praise to the bard that gives praise to men :
My curse upon Aodh, the priest of Skard,
Who jeers at the bard-songs of Ikerren !

THE LEGENDS.

A BARD SONG.

I.

DEAD is the Prince of the Silver Hand,
And dead Eochy the son of Erc !
Ere lived Milesius they ruled the land
Thou hast ruled and lost in turn, O'Ruark !

Two thousand years have pass'd since then,
And clans and kingdoms in blind commotion
Have butted at heaven and sunk again
As great waves sink in the depths of ocean.

II.

Last King of the Gaels of Eire, be still !
What God decrees must come to pass :
There is none that soundeth His way or will :
His hand is iron, and earth is glass.
Where built the Firbolgs shrieks the owl ;
The Tuatha bequeath'd but the name of Eire :
Roderick, our last of kings, thy cowl
Outweighs the crown of thy kingly sire !

THE FAITHFUL NORMAN.

I.

PRAISE to the valiant and faithful foe !
Give us noble foes, not the friend who lies !
We dread the drugg'd cup, not the open blow ;
We dread the old hate in the new disguise.
To Ossory's Prince they had pledged their word :
He stood in their camp, and their pledge they
broke ;
Then Maurice the Norman upraised his sword ;
The Cross on its hilt he kiss'd, and spoke :

II.

' So long as this sword or this arm hath might
I swear by the Cross which is lord of all,

By the faith and honour of noble and knight
Who touches yon Prince by this hand shall fall !
So side by side through the throng they pass'd ;
And Eire gave praise to the just and true.
Brave foe ! the Past truth heals at last :
There is room in the great heart of Eire for you !

SONG.

I

WILLOW-LIKE maid with the long loose tresses,
With locks like Diarba's, and fairy foot,
That gatherest up from the streamlet its cresses,
Above that caroller bending mute,
Those tresses black in a fillet bind,
Or beware of Manannan the god of the wind !

II.

No fear of the Stranger with feet like those ;
No fear of the robbers that couch in the glen :
But the Wind-god blows on thy cheek a rose,
Then back returns to kiss it again.
Manannan, they say, is the God in air—
So sang the Tuatha—Bind close thy hair !

III.

The red on her cheek was brightening still ;
A smile ran o'er it and made reply
As she cast from the darkling and sparkling rill
The flash of a darkling and sparkling eye ;
Then over her shoulder her long locks flung
And homeward tripp'd with a mirthful song.

THE LEGENDS.

A BARD SONG.

I.

THEY fought ere sunrise at Tor Conainn ;
 All day they fought on the hoarse sea-shore ;
 The sun dropp'd downward ; they fought amain ;
 The tide rose upward ; they fought the more.
 The sands were cover'd ; the sea grew red ;
 The warriors fought in the reddening wave ;
 That night the sea was the Sea-King's bed ;
 The Land-King drifted by cliff and cave.

II.

Great was the rage in those ancient days
 (We were pagans then) in the land of Eire ;
 Like eagles men vanquish'd the noontide blaze ;
 Their bones were granite ; their nerves were wire.
 We are hinds to-day ! The Nemedian kings
 Like elk and bison of old stalk'd forth ;
 Their name—the 'Sea Kings'—for ever clings
 To the 'Giant Stepping Stones' round the North.

THE BARD ETHELL.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

I.

I AM Ethell, the son of Conn ;
 Here I bide at the foot of the hill ;
 I am clansman to Brian and servant to none ;
 Whom I hated I hate ; whom I loved love still.

Blind am I. On milk I live,
And meat (God sends it) on each Saint's Day,
Though Donald Mac Art—may he never thrive—
Last Shrovetide drove half my kine away !

II.

At the brown hill's base, by the pale blue lake,
I dwell, and see the things I saw ;
The heron flap heavily up from the brake,
The crow fly homeward with twig or straw,
The wild duck, a silver line in wake,
Cutting the calm mere to far Bunaw.
And the things that I heard though deaf I hear ;
From the tower in the island the feastful cheer ;
The horn from the wood ; the plunge of the stag,
With the loud hounds after him, down from the crag.
Sweet is the chase, but the battle is sweeter ;
More healthful, more joyous, for true men meeter !

III.

My hand is weak ; it once was strong :
My heart burns still with its ancient fire :
If any man smites me he does me wrong,
For I was the Bard of Brian Mac Guire.
If any man slay me—not unaware,
By no chance blow, nor in wine and revel,
I have stored beforehand a curse in my prayer
For his kith and kindred : his deed is evil.

IV.

There never was King, and there never will be,
In battle or banquet like Malachi !
The Seers his reign had predicted long ;
He honour'd the Bards, and gave gold for song.

If rebels arose he put out their eyes ;
If robbers plunder'd or burn'd the fanes
He hung them in chaplets, like rosaries,
That others, beholding, might take more pains :
There was none to women more reverent-minded,
For he held his mother, and Mary, dear ;
If any man wrong'd them that man he blinded
Or straight amerced him of hand or ear.
There was none who founded more convents—none ;
In his palace the old and poor were fed ;
The orphan walked, and the widow's son,
Without groom or page to his throne or bed.
In council he mused, with great brows divine,
And eyes like the eyes of the musing kine,
Upholding a Sceptre o'er which, men said,
Seven Spirits of Wisdom like fire-tongues played.
He drain'd ten lakes and he built ten bridges ;
He bought a gold book for a thousand cows ;
He slew ten Princes who brake their pledges ;
With the bribed and the base he scorn'd to carouse.
He was sweet and awful ; through all his reign
God gave great harvests to vale and plain ;
From his nurse's milk he was kind and brave :
And when he went down to his well-wept grave
Through the triumph of penance his soul uprose
To God and the Saints. Not so his foes !

v.

The King that came after ! ah woe, woe, woe !
He doubted his friend and he trusted his foe.
He bought and he sold : his kingdom old
He pledged and pawn'd to avenge a spite :
No Bard or prophet his birth foretold :
He was guarded and warded both day and night :

He counsell'd with fools and had boors at his feast ;
 He was cruel to Christian and kind to beast :
 Men smiled when they talk'd of him far o'er the
 wave :

Paid were the mourners that wept at his grave !
 God plagued for his sake his people sore :—

They sinn'd ; for the people should watch and pray
 That their prayers, like angels at window and door,
 May keep from the King the bad thought away !

VI.

The sun has risen : on lip and brow

He greets me—I feel it—with golden wand.

Ah, bright-faced Norna ! I see thee now ;

Where first I saw thee I see thee stand !

From the trellis the girl look'd down on me :

Her maidens stood near : it was late in spring :

The grey priests laugh'd as she cried in glee

‘ Good Bard, a song in my honour sing ! ’

I sang her praise in a loud-voiced hymn

To God who had fashion'd her, face and limb,

For the praise of the clan and the land's behoof :

So she flung me a flower from the trellis roof.

Ere long I saw her the hill descending—

O'er the lake the May morning rose moist and
 slow :

She pray'd me (her smile with the sweet voice blend-
 ing)

To teach her all that a woman should know.

Panting she stood : she was out of breath :

The wave of her little breast was shaking :

From eyes still childish and dark as death

Came womanhood's dawn through a dew-cloud
 breaking.

Norna was never long time the same :

By a spirit so strong was her slight form moulded
The curves swell'd out from the flower-like frame

In joy ; in grief to a bud she folded :
As she listen'd her eyes grew bright and large
Like springs rain-fed that dilate their marge.

VII.

So I taught her the hymn of Patrick the Apostle,
And the marvels of Bridget and Columkille :
Ere long she sang like the lark or the throistle,
Sang the deeds of the servants of God's high
Will :

I told her of Brendon who found afar
Another world 'neath the western star ;
Of our three great bishops in Lindisfarne isle ;
Of St. Fursey the wondrous, Fiacre without guile ;
Of Sedulius, hymn-maker when hymns were rare ;
Of Scotus the subtle who clove a hair
Into sixty parts, and had marge to spare.
To her brother I spake of Oisín and Fionn,
And they wept at the death of great Oisín's son.*

* The publications of the Ossianic Society have made us familiar with Fionn Mac Cumhal (the Fingal of McPherson), chief of the far-famed Irish militia, instituted in the third century to protect the kingdom from foreign invasion. Its organisation rendered it an army of extraordinary efficiency ; but, existing as a separate power, it became in time as formidable to the native sovereigns as to foreigners. The terrible battle of Gavra was its ruin. In it Oscar, the son of Oisín (or Ossian), and consequently the grandson of Fionn, fell in single combat with the Irish king Carbery, and nearly his whole army perished with him, A.D. 284. To this day Fionn and Oisín are household names in those parts of Western Ireland in which the traditional Gaelic poetry is recited.

I taught the heart of the boy to revel
 In tales of old greatness that never tire,
 And the virgin's, up-springing from earth's low level,
 To wed with heaven like the altar fire.
 I taught her all that a woman should know :
 And that none might teach her worse lore I gave
 her
 A dagger keen, and I taught her the blow
 That subdues the knave to discreet behaviour.
 A sand-stone there on my knee she set,
 And sharpen'd its point—I can see her yet—
 I held back her hair and she sharpen'd the edge
 While the wind piped low through the reeds and
 sedge.

VIII.

She died in the convent on Ina's height :
 I saw her the day that she took the veil :
 As slender she stood as the Paschal light,
 As tall and slender and bright and pale !
 I saw her ; and dropp'd as dead : bereaven
 Is earth when her holy ones leave her for heaven :
 Her brother fell in the fight at Beigh :
 May they plead for me, both, on my dying day !

IX.

All praise to the man who brought us the Faith !
 'Tis a staff by day and our pillow in death !
 All praise, I say, to that blessed youth
 Who heard in a dream from Tyrawley's strand
 That wail, 'Put forth o'er the sea thy hand ;
 In the dark we die : give us Hope and Truth !'
 But Patrick built not on Iorras' shore
 That convent where now the Franciscans dwell :

Columba was mighty in prayer and war ;

But the young monk preaches as loud as his bell
That love must rule all and all wrongs be forgiven,
Or else, he is sure, we shall reach not heaven !
This doctrine I count right cruel and hard :
And when I am laid in the old churchyard
The habit of Francis I will not wear ;
Nor wear I his cord, or his cloth of hair
In secret. Men dwindle : till psalm and prayer
Had soften'd the land no Dane dwelt there !

X.

I forgive old Cathbar who sank my boat :

Must I pardon Feargal who slew my son ;
Or the pirate, Strongbow, who burn'd Granote,

They tell me, and in it nine priests, a nun,
And—worst—Saint Finian's old crosier staff ?
At forgiveness like that I spit and laugh !
My chief, in his wine-cups, forgave twelve men ;
And of these a dozen rebell'd again !

There never was chief more brave than he !

The night he was born Loch Gur up-burst :
He was bard-loving, gift-making, loud of glee,
The last to fly, to advance the first.

He was like the top spray upon Uladh's oak,

He was like the tap-root of Argial's pine :
He was secret and sudden : as lightning his stroke :

There was none that could fathom his hid design !
He slept not : if any man scorn'd his alliance
He struck the first blow for a frank defiance
With that look in his face, half night half light,
Like the lake gust-blacken'd yet ridged with white !
There were comely wonders before he died :
The eagle barked and the Banshee cried ;

The witch-elm wept with a blighted bud :
The spray of the torrent was red with blood :
The chief, return'd from the mountain's bound,
Forgat to question of Bran, his hound.
We knew he would die : three days were o'er ;
He died. We *waked* him for three days more.
One by one, upon brow and breast
The whole clan kiss'd him. In peace may he rest !

XI.

I sang his dirge. I could sing that time
Four thousand staves of ancestral rhyme :
To-day I can scarcely sing the half :
Of old I was corn and now I am chaff !
My song to-day is a breeze that shakes
Feebly the down on the cygnet's breast :
'Twas then a billow the beach that rakes,
Or a storm that buffets the mountain's crest.
Whatever I bit with a venom'd song
Grew sick, were it beast, or tree, or man :
The wrong'd one sued me to right his wrong
With the flail of the Satire and fierce Ode's fan.
I sang to the chieftains : each stock I traced
Lest lines should grow tangled through fraud or
haste.
To princes I sang in a loftier tone,
Of Moran the Just who refused a throne ;
Of Moran whose torque would close, and choke
The wry-necked witness that falsely spoke.
I taught them how to win love and hate,
Not love from all ; and to shun debate.
To maids in the bower I sang of love :
And of war at the feastings in bawn or grove.

XII.

Great is our Order ; but greater far
Were its pomp and power in the days of old,
When the five Chief Bards in peace or war
Had thirty bards each in his train enroll'd ;
When Ollave Fodhla in Tara's hall
Fed bards and kings : when the boy, king Nial,
Was train'd by Torna : when Britain and Gaul
Sent crowns of laurel to Dallan Forgial.
To-day we can launch the clans into fight :
That day we could freeze them in mid career !
Whatever man knows was our realm by right :
The lore without music no Gael would hear.
Old Cormac, the brave blind king, was bard
Ere fame rose yet of O'Daly and Ward.
The son of Milesius was bard—'Go back,
My People,' he sang ; 'ye have done a wrong !
Nine waves go back o'er the green sea track ;
Let your foes their castles and coasts make strong.
To the island ye came by stealth and at night :
She is ours if we win her in all men's sight !'
For that first song's sake let our bards hold fast
To Truth and Justice from first to last !
'Tis over ! some think we err'd through pride,
Though Columba the vengeance turned aside.
Too strong we were not : too rich we were :
Give wealth to knaves :—'tis the true man's snare !

XIII.

But now men lie : they are just no more :
They forsake the old ways : they quest for new :
They pry and they snuff after strange false lore
As dogs hunt vermin ! It never was true :—

I have scorn'd it for twenty years—this babble
That eastward and southward a Saxon rabble
Have won great battles, and rule large lands,
And plight with daughters of ours their hands !
We know the bold Norman o'erset their throne
Long since ! Our lands ! Let them guard their own !

XIV.

How long He leaves me—the great God—here !
Have I sinn'd some sin, or has God forgotten ?
This year I think is my hundredth year :
I am like a bad apple, unripe yet rotten !
They shall lift me ere long, they shall lay me—the
clan—

By the strength of men on mount Cruachan !
God has much to think of ! How much he hath seen
And how much is gone by that once hath been !
On sandy hills where the rabbits burrow
Are Rathes of Kings men name not now :
On mountain tops I have tracked the furrow
And found in forests the buried plough.
For one now living the strong land then
Gave kindly food and raiment to ten.
No doubt they wax'd proud and their God defied ;
So their harvest He blighted or burned their
hoard ;
Or He sent them plague, or He sent the sword :
Or He sent them lightning ; and so they died
Like Dathi, the king, on the dark Alp's side.

XV.

Ah me that man who is made of dust
Should have pride toward God ! 'Tis a demon's
spleen !

I have often fear'd lest God, the All-just,
Should bend from heaven and sweep earth clean,
Should sweep us all into corners and holes,
Like dust of the house-floor, both bodies and souls !
I have often fear'd He would send some wind
In wrath ; and the nation wake up stone-blind.
In age or in youth we have all wrought ill :
I say not our great king Nial did well,
Although he was Lord of the Pledges Nine
When, beside subduing this land of Eire,
He raised in Armorica banner and sign,
And wasted the British coast with fire.
Perhaps in His mercy the Lord will say,
'These men ! God's help ! 'Twas a rough boy
play !'
He is certain—that young Franciscan Priest—
God sees great sin where men see least :
Yet this were to give unto God the eye
Unmeet the thought, of the humming fly !
I trust there are small things He scorns to see
In the lowly who cry to Him piteously.
Our hope is Christ. I have wept full oft
He came not to Eire in Oisin's time ;
Though love, and those new monks, would make
men soft
If they were not harden'd by war and rhyme.
I have done my part : my end draws nigh :
I shall leave old Eire with a smile and sigh :
She will miss not me as I miss'd my son :
Yet for her, and her praise, were my best deeds done.
Man's deeds ! man's deeds ! they are shades that fleet,
Or ripples like those that break at my feet.
The deeds of my chief and the deeds of my King
Grow hazy, far seen, like the hills in spring.

Nothing is great save the death on the Cross !
But Pilate and Herod I hate, and know
Had Fionn lived then he had laid them low
Though the world thereby had sustain'd great loss.
My blindness and deafness and aching back
With meekness I bear for that suffering's sake ;
And the Lent-fast for Mary's sake I love,
And the honour of Him, the Man above !
My songs are all over now :—so best !
They are laid in the heavenly Singer's breast
Who never sings but a star is born :
May we hear His song in the endless morn !
I give glory to God for our battles won
By wood or river, on bay or creek ;
For Norna—who died ; for my father, Conn :
For feasts, and the chase on the mountains bleak :
I bewail my sins, both unknown and known,
And of those I have injured forgiveness seek.
The men that were wicked to me and mine ;—
(Not quenching a wrong, nor in war nor wine)
I forgive and absolve them all, save three :
May Christ in His mercy be kind to me !

KING MALACHI.

A BARD SONG.

I.

'Twas a holy time when the Kings, long foemen,
Fought, side by side, to uplift the serf ;
Never triumph'd in old time Greek or Roman
As Brian and Malachi at Clontarf.

There was peace in Eire for long years after
 Canute in England reign'd and Sweyn ;
 But Eire found rest, and the freeman's laughter
 Rang out the knell of the vanquished Dane.

II.

Praise to the King of eighty years
 Who rode round the battle-field, cross in hand !
 But the blessing of Eire and grateful tears
 To the King who fought under Brian's command !
 A crown in heaven for the King who brake,
 To staunch old discords, his royal wand :
 Who spurned his throne for his People's sake,
 Who served a rival and saved the land !

SAINT PATRICK AND THE KNIGHT ;

OR, THE INAUGURATION OF IRISH CHIVALRY.

I.

'Thou shalt not be a Priest,' he said ;
 ' Christ hath for thee a lowlier task :
 Be thou His soldier ! Wear with dread
 His Cross upon thy shield and casque !
 Put on God's armour, faithful knight !
 Mercy with justice, love with law ;
 Nor e'er except for truth and right
 This sword, cross-hilted, dare to draw.'

II.

He spake, and with his crosier pointed
 Graved on the broad shield's brazen boss

(That hour baptised, confirmed, anointed
 Stood Erin's chivalry) the Cross ;
 And there was heard a whisper low—
 Saint Michael, was that whisper thine ?
 'Thou Sword, keep pure thy virgin vow,
 And trenchant shalt thou be as mine.'

*THE BALLAD OF THE BIER THAT
 CONQUERED ;*

OR, O'DONNELL'S ANSWER.

A. D. 1257.

Maurice Fitz Gerald, Lord Justice, marched to the north-west, and a furious battle was fought between him and Godfrey O'Donnell, Prince of Tírconnell, at Creadran-Killa, north of Sligo, A. D. 1257. The two leaders met in single combat, and severely wounded each other. It was of the wound he then received that O'Donnell died, after triumphantly defeating his great rival in Ulster, O'Neill. The latter, hearing that O'Donnell was dying, demanded hostages from the Kinel Connell. The messengers who brought this insolent message fled in terror the moment they had delivered it ;—and the answer to it was brought by O'Donnell on his bier. Maurice Fitz Gerald finally retired to the Franciscan monastery which he had founded at Youghal, and died peacefully in the habit of that Order.

LAND which the Norman would make his own !
 (Thus sang the Bard 'mid a host o'erthrown,
 While their white cheeks some on the clench'd hand
 propp'd,
 And from some the life-blood unheeded dropp'd)
 There are men in thee that refuse to die,
 Though they scorn to live, while a foe stands nigh !

I.

O'Donnell lay sick with a grievous wound :

The leech had left him ; the priest had come ;
The clan sat weeping upon the ground,
Their banners furl'd, and their minstrels dumb.

II.

Then spake O'Donnell, the King : ‘ Although
My hour draws nigh, and my dolours grow ;
And although my sins I have now confess'd,
And desire in the Land, my charge, to rest,
Yet leave this realm, nor will I nor can
While a stranger treads on her, child or man.

III.

I will languish no longer a sick King here :
My bed is grievous ; build up my Bier.
The white robe a King wears over me throw ;
Bear me forth to the field where he camps—your
foe,
With the yellow torches and dirges low.
The heralds have brought his challenge and fled ;
The answer they bore not I bear instead :
My People shall fight, my pain in sight,
And I shall sleep well when their wrong stands
right.’

IV.

Then the clan rose up from the ground, and gave ear,
And they fell'd great oak-trees and built a Bier ;
Its plumes from the eagle's wings were shed,
And the wine-black samite above it spread
Inwov'n with sad emblems and texts divine,
And the braided bud of Tirconnell's pine,

And all that is meet for the great and brave
 When past are the measured years God gave,
 And a voice cries 'Come' from the waiting grave.

V.

When the Bier was ready they laid him thereon ;
 And the army forth bore him with wail and moan :
 With wail by the sea-lakes and rock-abysses ;
 With moan through the vapour-trail'd wildernesses ;
 And men sore wounded themselves drew nigh
 And said, ' We will go with our King and die ;'
 And women wept as the pomp pass'd by.
 The yellow torches far off were seen ;
 No war-note peal'd through the gorges green ;
 But the black pines echo'd the mourners' keen.

VI.

What said the Invader, that pomp in sight ?
 ' They sue for the pity they shall not win.'
 But the sick King sat on the Bier upright,
 And said, ' So well ! I shall sleep to-night :—
 Rest here my couch, and my peace begin.'

VII.

Then the war-cry sounded—' Lamb-dearg Aboo !'
 And the whole clan rushed to the battle plain :
 They were thrice driven back, but they closed anew
 That an end might come to their King's great
 pain.
 'Twas a nation, not army, that onward rush'd,
 'Twas a nation's blood from their wounds that
 gush'd :
 Bare-bosom'd they fought, and with joy were slain ;
 Till evening their blood fell fast like rain ;

But a shout swell'd up o'er the setting sun,
And O'Donnell died, for the field was won.

So they buried their King upon Aileach's shore ;
And in peace he slept ;—O'Donnell More.

THE DIRGE OF ATHUNREE

A.D. 1316.

I.

ATHUNREE ! Athunree !
Erin's crown, it fell on thee !
Ne'er till then in all its woe
Did her heart its hope forego.
Save a little child—but one—
The latest regal race is gone.
Roderick died again on thee,
Athunree !

II.

Athunree ! Athunree !
A hundred years and forty-three
Winter-wing'd and black as night
O'er the land had track'd their flight :
In Clonmacnoise from earthy bed
Roderick raised once more his head :—
Fedlim floodlike rushed to thee,
Athunree !

III.

Athunree ! Athunree !
The light that struggled sank on thee !

Ne'er since Cathall the red-handed
Such a host till then was banded.
Long-haired Kerne and Galloglass
Met the Norman face to face ;
The saffron standard floated far
O'er the on-rolling wave of war ;
Bards the onset sang on thee,
Athunree !

IV.

Athunree ! Athunree !
The poison tree took root in thee !
What might naked breasts avail
'Gainst sharp spear and steel-ribbed mail ?
Of our Princes twenty-nine
Bulwarks fair of Connor's line,
Of our clansmen thousands ten
Slept on thy red ridges. Then—
Then the night came down on thee,
Athunree !

V.

Athunree ! Athunree !
Strangely shone that moon on thee !
Like the lamp of them that tread
Staggering o'er the heaps of dead,
Seeking that they fear to see.
O that widows' wailing sore !
On it rang to Oranmore ;
Died, they say, among the piles
That make holy Aran's isles ;—
It was Erin wept on thee,
Athunree !

VI.

Athunree ! Athunree !
The sword of Erin brake on thee !
Thrice a hundred wounded men,
Slowly nursed in wood or glen,
When the tidings came of thee
Rushed in madness to the sea ;
Hurled their swords into the waves,
Raving died in ocean caves :—
Would that they had died on thee,
Athunree !

VII.

Athunree ! Athunree !
The heart of Erin burst on thee !
Since that hour some unseen hand
On her forehead stamps the brand :
Her children ate that hour the fruit
That slays manhood at the root ;
Our warriors are not what they were ;
Our maids no more are blithe and fair ;
Truth and Honour died with thee,
Athunree !

VIII.

Athunree ! Athunree !
Never harvest wave o'er thee !
Never sweetly-breathing kine
Pant o'er golden meads of thine !
Barren be thou as the tomb ;
May the night-bird haunt thy gloom
And the wailer from the sea,
Athunree !

IX.

Athunree! Athunree!
All my heart is sore for thee;
It was Erin died on thee,
Athunree!

THE DIRGE OF EDWARD BRUCE.

A.D. 1318.

I.

HE is dead, dead, dead!
The man to Erin dear!
The King who gave our Isle a head—
His kingdom is his bier.
He rode into our war;
And we crown'd him chief and prince
For his race to Alba's shore
Sailed from Erin, ages since.
Woe, woe, woe!
Edward Bruce is cold to-day;
He that slew him lies as low,
Sword to sword and clay to clay.

II.

King Robert came too late!
Long, long may Erin mourn!
Famine's rage and dreadful Fate
Forbade her Bannockburn!
As the galley touch'd the strand
Came the messenger of woe;

The King put back the herâld's hand :
 'Peace,' he said, 'thy tale I know !
His face was in the cloud ;
 And his wraith was on the surge.'—
Maids of Alba, weave his shroud !
 Maids of Erin, sing his dirge !

THE TRUE KING.

A BARD SONG.

A.D. 1399.

I.

HE came in the night on a false pretence ;
 As a friend he came ; as a lord remains :
His coming we noted not ; when, or whence ;
 We slept : we woke in chains.
Ere a year they had chased us to dens and caves ;
 Our streets and our churches lay drown'd in blood ;
The race that had sold us their sons as slaves
 In our Land as conquerors stood !

II.

Who were they, those princes that gave away
 What was theirs to keep, not theirs to give ?
A king holds sway for a passing day ;
 The kingdoms for ever live !
The Tanist succeeds when the King is dust :
 The King rules all ; yet the King hath nought :
They were traitors not Kings who sold their trust ;
 They were traitors not Kings who bought !

III.

Brave Art Mac Murrrough!—Arise, 'tis morn!
 For a true King the nation waited long,
 He is strong as the horn of the unicorn,
 This true King who rights our wrong!
 He rules in the fight by an inward right;
 From the heart of the nation her king is grown;
 He rules by right; he is might of her might;
 Her flesh, and bone of her bone!

*THE BALLAD OF QUEEN MARGARET'S
 FEASTING.*

A.D. 1451.

The Irish chronicler thus concludes: 'God's blessing, the blessing of all the Saints, and of every one, blessing from Jerusalem to Inis Glaaire, be on her going to heaven; and blessed be he who will read and heare this for blessing her Soul; and cursed be that sore in her breast that killed Margaret.'

I.

FAIR she stood—God's queenly creature!
 Wondrous joy was in her face;
 Of her ladies none in stature
 Like to her, and none in grace.
 On the church-roof stood they round her,
 Cloth of gold was her attire;
 They in jewell'd circle wound her;—
 Beside her Ely's King, her sire.

II.

Far and near the green fields glitter'd
 Like to flowery meads in Spring,

Gay with companies loose-scatter'd
 Ranged each in seemly ring
 Under banners red or yellow :
 There all day the feast they kept
 From chill dawn and noontide mellow
 Till the hill-shades eastward crept.

III.

On a white steed at the gateway
 Margaret's husband, Calwagh, sate :
 Guest on guest, approaching, straightway
 Welcomed he with love and state.
 Each pass'd on with largess laden :
 Chosen gifts of thought and work,
 Now the red cloak of the maiden,
 Now the minstrel's golden torque.

IV.

On the wind the tapestries shifted ;
 From the blue hills rang the horn ;
 Slowly toward the sunset drifted
 Choral song and shout breeze-borne.
 Like a sea the crowds unresting
 Murmur'd round the grey church-tower ;
 Many a prayer amid the feasting,
 For Margaret's mother rose that hour !

V.

On the church-roof kerne and noble
 At her bright face look'd, half-dazed ;
 Nought was hers of shame or trouble ;
 On the crowds far off she gazed :
 Once, on heaven her dark eyes bending,
 Her hands in prayer she flung apart :

Unconsciously her arms extending
She bless'd her People in her heart.

VI.

Thus a Gaelic queen and nation
At Imayn till set of sun
Kept with feast the Annunciation,
Fourteen hundred fifty-one.
Time it was of solace tender ;—
'Twas a brave time, strong yet fair !
Blessing, O ye Angels, send her
From Salem's towers and Inisglair !

THE WEDDING OF THE CLANS.

A GIRL'S BABBLE.

I go to knit two clans together ;
Our clan and this clan unseen of yore :
Our clan fears nought ! but I go, O whither ?
This day I go from my Mother's door.

Thou redbreast sing'st the old song over
Though many a time thou hast sung it before ;
They never sent thee to some strange new lover :—
I sing a new song by my Mother's door.

I stepp'd from my little room down by the ladder,
The ladder that never so shook before ;
I was sad last night : to-day I am sadder
Because I go from my Mother's door.

The last snow melts upon bush and bramble ;
The gold bars shine on the forest's floor ;

Shake not, thou leaf ! it is I must tremble
Because I go from my Mother's door.

From a Spanish sailor a dagger I bought me ;
I trail'd a rose-tree our grey bawn o'er ;
The creed and my letters our old bard taught me ;
My days were sweet by my Mother's door.

My little white goat that with raised feet huggest
The oak stock, thy horns in the ivies froze,
Could I wrestle like thee—how the wreaths thou
tuggest !—
I never would move from my Mother's door.

O weep no longer, my nurse and Mother !
My foster-sister, weep not so sore !
You cannot come with me, Ir, my brother ;
Alone I go from my Mother's door.

Farewell, my wolf-hound, that slew Mac Owing
As he caught me and far through the thickets
bore :
My heifer, Alb, in the green vale lowing,
My cygnet's nest upon Lorna's shore !

He has killed ten chiefs, this chief that plights me ;
His hand is like that of the giant Balor :
But I fear his kiss ; and his beard affrights me,
And the great stone dragon above his door.

Had I daughters nine with me they should tarry ;
They should sing old songs ; they should dance at
my door ;
They should grind at the quern ;—no need to marry !
O when will this marriage-day be o'er ?

THE IRISH NORMAN;

OR, 'LAMENT FOR THE BARON OF LOUGHMOE.' *

I.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge?
Not the corded brethren hooded
With the earth-hued cloak and cowl:—
'Mid the black church mourner-crowded
While the night winds round it howl
Let them, in the chancel kneeling,
Lift the hymns to God appealing:
Let them scare the Powers of Evil,
Striking dumb the accusing devil:
Let them angel-fence the Soul
That flies forward to its goal:
Prayer can quicken: fire can purge:
Yet they shall not sing his dirge!

II.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge?
Not the ceremonial weepers
Blackening o'er the place of tombs:
Though their cry might wake the sleepers
In the dark that wait their dooms;
Though their dreadful ululation
Sounds the death-note of a nation;
Though the far-off listeners shiver
Wave-tossed seamen, weary reapers
Shiver like to funeral plumes,
While the long wail like a river
Rolls beyond the horizon's verge;
Yet they shall not sing his dirge!

* The name of an Irish air.

III.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge?
Not the minstrels of his presence,
Harpers of his halls and towers :
Let them, 'mid the bowery pleasance,
Sing that flower among the flowers,
Female beauty :—swift its race is
As the smiles on infant faces !
O, ye conquering years and hours !
Children that together played
Love and wed, and then are laid
Grey-haired beneath the yew-tree bowers,
Passing gleams in glooms that merge ;
Yet they shall not sing his dirge !

IV.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge ?
Sing it castles that he wasted
Like those old oaks thunder-blasted,
Wasted with the sword or fire !
Sternness God with sweetness mateth ;
Next to him that well createth
Is the just and brave Destroyer !
The man that sinned, the same must fall,
Though Peter by him stood and Paul !
They his clansmen, they his gleemen,
They that wear the garb of freemen
Wore the sackcloth, wore the serge :—
Let them sing the Baron's dirge.

V.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge ?
Whoso fain would sing it faileth,

Triumph so o'er grief prevaiileth !
 Double-fountained was his blood,
 A Gaelic spring, a Norman flood !
 To his bosom truth he folded
 With a youthful lover's zeal :
 God's great Justice seemed he, moulded
 In a statued shape of steel !
 Men were liars ; kerne and noble ;
 He consumed them like to stubble !
 The orphan's shield, the traitor's scourge—
 Sing, fierce winds, the Baron's dirge !

VI.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge ?
 O thou dread Almighty Will !
 Man exulteth ; woman plaineth ;
 But the Will Supreme ordaineth,
 And the years its fate fulfil.
 All our reason is unreason ;
 All our glory ends in woe :
 Thou didst raise him for a season,
 Thou once more hast laid him low !
 But his strong life sought Thee ever ;
 Sought Thee like a mountain river
 Lost at last in the sea surge—
 No ! we will not sing his dirge !

VII.

Who shall sing the Baron's dirge ?
 'Twas no time of sobs or sighing :
 Grave, yet glad, he lay a dying.
 Heralds through the vales were sent
 Bidding all men pray for grace

That he rightly might repent
 Sins of his and all his race :
 Well he worked : three days his spirit
 Throve in prayer and waxed in merit.
 The blessed lights aloft were raised :
 On the Cross his dim eyes gazed
 To the last breath's ebb and gurge—
 No ! for him we chant no dirge !

THE STATUTE OF KILKENNY.

The Statute of Kilkenny, passed A.D. 1362, is thus described by an English historian, Mr. Plowden :—‘It was enacted that intermarriages with the natives, or any connection with them *as fosterers, or in the way of gossipred*, should be punished as high treason ; that the use of their name, language, apparel, or customs should be punished with the forfeiture of lands and tene-ments ; that to submit to be governed by the Brehon Laws was treason ; that the English should not make war upon the natives without the permission and authority of Government ; that the English should not permit the Irish to graze upon their lands ; that they should not admit them to any benefice or religious privilege, or even entertain their bards.’

Of old ye warr'd on men : to-day
 On women and on babes ye war ;
 The noble's child his head must lay
 Beneath the peasant's roof no more !

I saw in sleep the infant's hand
 His foster-brother's fiercely grasp ;
 His warm arm, lithe as willow wand,
 Twines me each day with closer clasp !

O infant smiler ! grief-beguiler !
 Between the oppressor and the oppress'd
 O soft, unconscious reconciler,
 Smile on ! through thee the Land is bless'd.

Through thee the puissant love the poor ;
His conqueror's hope the vanquish'd shares :
For thy sake by a lowly door
The clan made vassal stops and stares.

Our vales are healthy. On thy cheek
There dawns each day a livelier red :
Smile on ! Before another week
Thy feet our earthen floor will tread !

Thy foster-brothers twain for thee
Would face the wolves on snowy fell :
Smile on ! the ' Irish Enemy '
Will fence their Norman nursling well.

The nursling as the child is dear ;
Thy Mother loves not like thy nurse !
That babbling Mandate steps not near
Thy cot but o'er her bleeding corse !

THE DAYS OF OUTLAWRY.

I.

A CRY comes up from wood and wold,
A wail from fen and marish,
' Grant us our Laws, and take our gold ;
Like beasts dog-chased we perish.'—
The hunters of their kind reply,
' Our sports we scorn to barter ;
We rule ! the Irish Enemy
Partakes not England's charter.'

II.

A cry comes up for ever new
A wail of hopeless anguish,
'Your Laws, your Laws!—our Laws ye slew;
In living death we languish.'—
'Not so! We keep our hunting-ground;
We chase the flying quarry.
Hark, hark, that sound! the horn and hound!
Away! we may not tarry!'

III.

Sad isle, thy laws are Norman lords*
That, dower'd by Henry's bounty,
On cities sup 'mid famish'd hordes,
And dine on half a county!
A laughing giant, Outlawry,
Strides drunk o'er hill and heather;
Justice to him is as a fly
"Twixt mail'd hands clash'd together.

IV.

O memory, memory, leave the graves
Knee-deep in grass and darnel!
Wash from a kingdom, winds and waves,
The odour of the charnel!
Be dumb, red graves in valleys deep,
Black towers on plains blood-sloken:—
Dark fields, your thrilling secrets keep,
Nor speak till God hath spoken!

* In the reign of Edward I. those Irish who lay contiguous to the county lands, finding themselves in a position of utter outlawry, the ancient Brehon Law of Ireland not being recognised by England, and English law not being extended to them, applied to the king for the protection of the latter. The inci-

THE THREE CHOIRS;

OR, THE CONSECRATION OF ST. PATRICK.

A BARD SONG.

WHILE holy hands on Patrick laid
The great Priest consecrated,
Three mystic choirs—so sang the bards—
Their anthems matched and mated ;

The first, that Roman choir which chants
O'er tombs of Paul and Peter ;
The next a Seraph band, with note
By distance rendered sweeter.

The third rang out from Fochlut's wood
Where once their ululation
Lost Erin's babes to Patrick raised—
' Redeem a wildered nation !'

Ring out once more, from Erin's shore !
From Rome, from Heaven, for ever
Roll on thou triple Psalm, that God
May answer and deliver !

dent is thus narrated by Plowden in his 'History of Ireland':—
'They consequently offered, through Ufford, the chief governor, 8,000 marks to the king, provided he would grant the free enjoyment of the laws of England to the whole body of Irish natives indiscriminately.' Edward was disposed to accept the offer; but in the words of Plowden:—'These politic and benevolent intentions of Edward were thwarted by his servants, who, to forward their own rapacious views of extortion and oppression, prevented a convention of the king's barons and other subjects in Ireland. . . The cry of oppression was not silenced ; the application of the Irish was renewed, and the king repeatedly solicited to accept them as free and faithful subjects.'

THE BALLAD OF TURGESIUS THE DANE;

OR, THE GIRL DELIVERER.

A BARD SONG.

THE people sat amid the dust and wept :
‘In darker days than these God burst the chain,’
Thus sang the harper as the chords he swept,
‘Hear of the Girl Deliverer and the Dane.’

PART I.

Twin ivy wreaths her forehead wound,
A green wreath and a yellow :
Her hair a gleaming dusk in ground
With ends of sunshine mellow.

Fair rose her head the tall neck o’er ;
That neck in snows was bedded :
Some crown, they swore, unseen she bore—
That queenly head it steadied.

Her sable vest in front was laced
With laces red as coral ;
Her golden zone in gems was traced
With leafy type and moral.

As treading hearts her small feet went
In love-suspended fleetness :
And hearts thus trodden forth had sent
An organ-sob of sweetness.

Upon the dais when she stept
Meath’s peopled hall rang loudly ;
Their hundred harps the minstrels swept :
Her sire looked round him proudly.

The Dane beside him, darkening, sate,
At once his guest and victor ;
Green Erin's scourge—the true King's fate—
The sceptred serf's protector.

‘ Sir King ! our worship grows but small !
Here Gaels alone find honour :
A white girl cannot cross your hall
But all men gaze upon her !

‘ My speech is short : yon stands my fort !
Ere three nights thither send her
With twenty maidens of her court,
Your fairest, to attend her.’

PART II.

The Dane strides o'er his stony floor
A strong, fierce man, yet hoary :
The low sun fires the purple moor
With mingled gloom and glory.

The tyrant stops ; he stares thereon :
Sun-touched, his armour flashes :
His rough grey hair a glow hath won
Like embers seen through ashes.

His mail'd hand grasps his tangled beard :
He laughs that red sun watching,
Till the roofs laugh back like a forest weird
The laughter of Wood-gods catching.

‘ My Sea-Kings ! mark yon furnace-sheen !
The Fire-god is not thrifty !
No flame like that these eyes have seen
For winters five-and-fifty.

‘My sire lay dead : the ship sailed North,
The pyre and the corse on bearing :
Six miles it sailed ; the flames sprang forth
Like sea-vest Hecla glaring !

‘We’ll pledge him to-night in the blood-red wine :
’Tis wrought, the task he set me !
From coast to coast this Isle is mine :
Not soon will her sons forget me !

‘I have burned their shrines and their cities
sacked ;
Their Fair Ones our castles cumber ;
We were shamed to-night if the bevy lacked
The fairest from their number.

‘Young wives for us all ; too many by half !
Strange mates—the hind with the dragon !’
He laughed as when the reveller’s laugh
Rings back from the half-drained flagon.

PART III.

The girl hath prayed at her Mother’s grave,
And kissed that grave, and risen :
She hath swathed a knife in a silken glaive :
She is calm, but her great eyes glisten.

Between silk vest and spotless breast
A dagger she hath hidden ;
With lips compressed gone forth, a guest
Unhonoured—not unbidden.

Through moonshine wan on moves she, on :
But who are those, the others ?
They are garbed like maids, but maids are none :
They are lovers of maids, and brothers.

The gates lie wide : they enter in :
Loud roars the riot and wassail :
They hear at times 'mid the conquerors' din
The harp of the Gaelic vassal.

The Dane has laid on her head his hand,
The love in his eye is cruel :
Out leap the swords of that well-masked band :
Two nations have met in duel !

'Twas God their sentence on high that wrote !
'Tis a righteous doom—that slaughter !
His Sea-Kings lie drowned in the castle moat,
And the Tyrant in Annin water.

From mountain to mountain the tidings flashed :
It pealed from turret to turret :
Like a sunlit storm o'er the plains it dashed :
It hung o'er the vales like a spirit.

'Twas a maiden's honour that crowned the right :
'Twas a vestal claim, scarce noted
By the power which trampled it out of sight,
That rose on the wrong, and smote it !

The harper ceased : aloud the young men cried,
'That maid is Erin ! Live, O maid, for ever !'
'Not Erin but her Faith,' the old priests replied :
'Her Faith—that only—shall the Land deliver !'

EPILOGUE.

At my casement I sat by night, while the wind
remote in dark valleys

Voluminous gather'd and grew, and waxing swell'd
to a gale :

Now mourning like seas heart-grieved, now sobbing
in petulant sallies :

Far off, 'twas a People's moan ; hard by, but a
widow's wail.

To God there is fragment none : nothing single ; no
isolation :

The ages to Him are one : round Him the Woe,
and the Wrong

Roll like a spiritual star, and the cry of the desolate
Nation :

The Souls that are under the Altar respond in
music ' How long ? '

By the casement I sat alone till sign after sign had
descended :

The Hyads rejoin'd their sea, and the Pleiads by
fate were down borne :

And then with that distant dirge a tenderer anthem
was blended,

And, glad to behold her young, the bird gave
thanks to the morn.

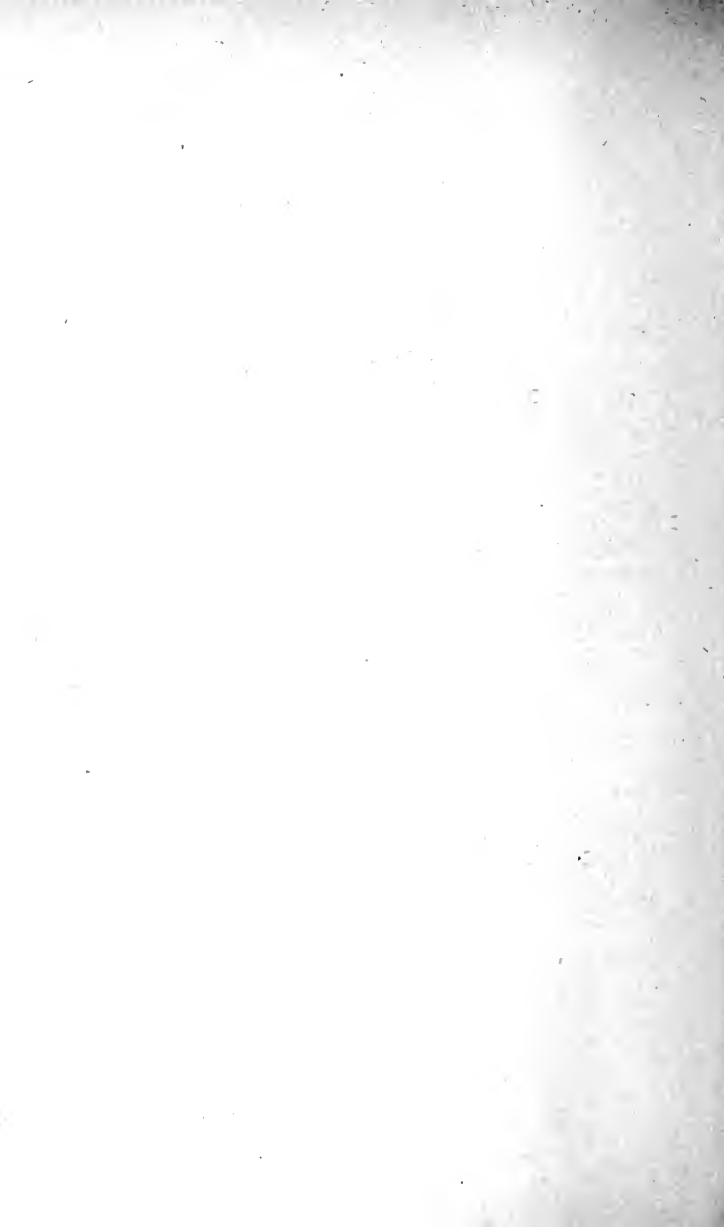
INISFAIL

A LYRICAL CHRONICLE OF IRELAND.

THE TRAGEDY.

PART II.

THE WARS OF RELIGION.



PART II.

Prologue.

'CAN THESE BONES LIVE?'

A VOICE from the midnight call'd, 'Arise, be alone,
and remove thee ;

Descend into valleys of bale, and look on the visions
of night ;

From the stranger flee, and be strange to the men
and the women that love thee

That thy wine may be tears, and that ashes may
mix with the meats of delight.

To few is the Vision shown, and to none for his weal
or from merit :

As lepers they live who see it ; as those that men
pity or hate :

And to few is the Voice reveal'd ; yet to them who
hear and can bear it

Though bitterness cometh at first, yet sweetness
cometh more late.'

Then in vision I saw a Corse—death-cold ; but the
Angels had draped it

In light ; and that light divine round the unseal'd
death-cave was strewn ;

And an anthem rush'd o'er the worlds ; but the
 tongue that moulded and shaped it
 Was a great storm through ruins borne ; and the
 lips that spake it were stone.

PLORANS PLORAVIT.

A.D. 1583.

SHE sits alone on the cold grave-stone
 And only the dead are nigh her ;
 In the tongue of the Gael she makes her wail :
 The night wind rushes by her.

‘ Few, O few are the leal and true,
 And fewer shall be, and fewer ;
 The land is a corse ; no life, no force :
 O wind with sere leaves strew her !

‘ Men ask what scope is left for hope
 To one who has known her story :—
 I trust her dead ! Their graves are red ;
 But their Souls are with God in glory.’

*ROISIN DUBH ; **

OR, THE BLEEDING HEART.

I.

O WHO art thou with that queenly brow
 And uncrown'd head ?

* Roisin Dubh signifies the ‘ Black little Rose.’ It is well known to the Irish reader through the poem written in Queen Elizabeth’s reign by the Bard of Red Hugh, Prince of Tirconnel.

And why is the vest that binds thy breast,
O'er the heart, blood-red ?
Like a rose-bud in June was that spot at noon,
A rose-bud weak ;
But it deepens and grows like a July rose :
Death-pale thy cheek !

II.

'The babes I fed at my foot lay dead ;
I saw them die :
In Ramah a blast went wailing past ;
It was Rachel's cry.
But I stand sublime on the shores of Time
And I pour mine ode
As Miriam sang to the cymbals' clang
On the wind to God.

III.

O sweet, men say, is the song by day,
And the feast by night ;
But on poisons I thrive, and in death survive
Through ghostly might.'

THE DIRGE OF DESMOND.

RUSH, dark Dirge, o'er hills of Erin ! Woe for Desmond's name and race !
Loving Conqueror whom the Conquered caught so soon to her embrace :
There's a veil on Erin's forehead : cold at last is Desmond's hand :—
Halls that roofed her outlawed Prelates blacken like a blackening brand.

Strongbow's sons forsook their Strong One, served
so long with loving awe ;

Roche the Norman, Norman Barry, and the Baron
of Lixnaw :

Gaelic lords—that once were Princes—holp not—
Thomond or Clancar :

Ormond, ill-crowned Tudor's kinsman, ranged her
hosts, and led her war.

One by one his brothers perished : Fate down dragged
them to their grave :

Smerwick's cliffs beheld his Spaniards wrestling
with the yeasty wave.

Slain the herds, and burned the harvests, vale and
plain with corpses strown,

'Mid the waste they spread their feast ; within the
charnel reigned—alone.

In the death-hunt she was nigh him ; she that
scorned to leave his side :

By her Lord she stood and spake not, neck-deep in
the freezing tide :

Round them waved the osiers ; o'er them drooped
the willows, rank on rank :

Troopers spurred ; and bayed the bloodhounds, up
and down the bleeding bank.

From the East sea to the West sea rings the death-
keen long and sore :

Erin's Curse be his that led them to the hovel, burst
the door !

O'er the embers dead an old man silent bent with
head to knee :

Slowly rose he : backward fell they :—' Seek ye
Desmond ? I am he.'

London Bridge ! thy central archway props that grey
head year by year :
But to God that head is holy ; and to Erin it is
dear :
When that bridge is dust, that river in the last fire-
judgment dried,
The man shall live who fought for God ; the man
who for his country died.

WAR-SONG OF MAC CARTHY.

I.

Two lives of an eagle, the old song saith,
Make the life of a black yew-tree ;
For two lives of a yew-tree the furrow's path
Endures on the grassy lea :
Two furrows shall last till the time is past
God willeth the world to be ;
For a furrow's time has Mac Carthy stood fast
Mac Carthy in Carbery.

II.

Up with the banner whose green shall live
While lives the green on the oak !
And down with the axes that grind and rive
Keen-edged as the thunder-stroke !
And on with the battle-cry known of old
And the clan-rush like wind and wave ;
On, on ! the Invader is bought and sold ;
His own hand hath dug his grave !

*FLORENCE MAC CARTHY'S FAREWELL
TO HIS ENGLISH LOVE.*

I.

ENGLAND's fair child, Evangeline !
In that far-distant land of mine
 There stands a Yew-tree among tombs !
For ages there that tree hath stood,
A black pall dash'd with drops of blood ;
 O'er all my world it breathes its glooms.

II.

Evangeline ! Evangeline !
Because my Yew-tree is not thine,
 Because thy Gods on mine wage war,
Farewell ! Back fall the gates of brass ;
The exile to his own must pass :
 I seek the land of tombs once more.

TO THE SAME.

WE *seem* to tread the self-same street,
 To pace the self-same courts or grass ;
Parting, our hands appear to meet :
 O vanitatum vanitas !

Distant as earth from heaven—or hell—
 From thee the things to me most dear :
Ghost-throng'd Cocytus and thy will
 Between us rush. . We might be near.

Thy world is fair : my thoughts refuse
To dance its dance or drink its wine ;
Nor canst thou hear the reeds and yews
That sigh to me from lands not thine.

THE DIRGE OF KILDARE.

A.D. 1595.

THE North wind clanged on the sharp hill-side :
The mountain muttered : the cloud replied ;
'There is one rides up through thy woods, Tyrone !
That shall ride on a bier of the pine branch down.'

The flood roars over Danara's bed :
'Twas green at morning : to-night 'tis red :
What whispers the raven to oak and cave ?
'Make ready the bier and make ready the grave.'

Kildare, Kildare ! Thou hast left the bound
Of hawk and heron, of hart and hound ;
With the hunters art come to the Lion's lair :
He is mighty of limb and old. Beware !

Beware, for on thee that eye is set
Which glared upon Norreys at Clontibret :
And that hand is lifted, from horse to heath
Which hurled the giant they mourn in Meath !

Kildare, Kildare ! There are twain this hour
With brows turned north from Maynooth's grey
tower :
The Mother sees nought : the bride shall see
The Herald and Death-flag far off—not thee.

*WAR-SONG OF TIRCONNELL'S BARD AT
THE BATTLE OF BLACKWATER.*

AUGUST 14, A.D. 1598.

At this battle the Irish of Ulster were commanded by 'Red Hugh' O'Neill, Prince of Tyrone, and by Hugh O'Donnell (called also 'Red Hugh'), Prince of Tirconnell. Queen Elizabeth's army was led by Marshal Bagnal, who fell in the rout with 2,500 of his force. Twelve thousand gold pieces, thirty-four standards, and all the artillery of the vanquished army were taken.

I.

GLORY to God, and to the Powers that fight
For Freedom and the Right !
We have them then, the Invaders ! There they stand
At last on Oriel's land !
And there the far-famed Marshal holds command,
Bagnal, their bravest, at his right
That recreant, neither chief nor knight,
'The Queen's O'Reilly,' he that sold
His country, clan, and church for gold.
They have pass'd the gorge stream-cloven,
And the mountain's purple bound ;
Now the toils are round them woven,
Now the nets are spread around !
Give them time : their steeds are blown ;—
Let them stand and round them stare,
Breathing blasts of Irish air :
Our eagles know their own !

II.

Twin Stars ! Twin regents of our righteous war !
This day remember whose, and who ye are—

Thou that o'er green Tir-owen's Tribes hast sway !
Thou whom Tirconnell's vales obey !
The line of Nial, the line of Conn
So oft at strife, to-day are one !
To Erin both are dear ; to me
Dearest he is, and needs must be
My Prince, my chief, my child, on whom
So early fell the dungeon's doom.
O'Donnell ! hear this day thy Bard !
By those young feet so maim'd and scarr'd,
Bit by the winter's fangs when lost
Thou wandered'st on through snows and frost,
Remember thou those years in chains thou worest,
Snatch'd in false peace from unsuspecting halls,
And that one thought, of all thy pangs the sorest,
Thy subjects groan'd the upstart Stranger's thralls !
That thought on waft thee through the fight :
On, on, for Erin's right !

III.

Seest thou yon stream whose tawny waters glide
Through weeds and yellow marsh lingeringly and
slowly ?
Blest is that spot and holy !
There, ages past, Saint Bercan stood and cried,
' This spot shall quell one day the Invaders' pride ! '
He saw in mystic trance
The blood-stain flush yon rill :
On, hosts of God, advance ;
Your country's fates fulfil !
Be Truth this day your might !
Truth lords it in the fight !

IV.

O'Neill ! That day be with thee now
When, throned on Ulster's regal seat of stone,
Thou sat'st and thou alone ;
While flocked from far the Tribes, and to thy hand
Was given the snow-white wand,
Erin's authentic sceptre of command !
Kingless a People stood around thee ! Thou
Didst dash the alien bauble from thy brow,
And for a coronet laid down
That People's love became once more their Mon-
arch's crown !
True King alone is he
In whom made one his People share the throne :
Fair from the soil he rises like a tree :
Rock-like the Tyrant presses on it, prone !
Strike for that People's cause !
For Gaelic rights ; for Brehon laws :
The sage traditions of civility ;
Pure hearths, and Faith set free !

V.

Hark ! the thunder of their meeting !
Hand meets hand, and rough the greeting !
Hark ! the crash of shield and brand ;
They mix, they mingle, band with band,
Like two horn-commingling stags
Wrestling on the mountain crags,
Intertwisted, intertangled,
Mangled forehead meeting mangled !
Lo ! the wavering darkness through
I see the banner of Red Hugh ;

Close beside is thine, O'Neill !
Now they stoop and now they reel,
Rise once more and onward sail,
Like two falcons on one gale !
O ye clansmen past me rushing,
Like mountain torrents seaward gushing,
Tell the chiefs that from this height
Their chief of Bards beholds the fight ;
That on theirs he pours his spirit ;
Marks their deeds and chants their merit ;
While the Priesthood evermore,
Like him that ruled God's host of yore,
With arms outstretch'd that God implore !

VI.

Mightiest of the line of Conn,
On to victory ! On, on, on !
It is Erin that in thee
Lives and works right wondrously !
Eva from the heavenly bourne
Upon thee her eyes doth turn,
She whose marriage couch was spread
'Twixt the dying and the dead !
Parcell'd kingdoms one by one
For a prey to traitors thrown ;
Pledges forfeit, broken vows,
Roofless fane and blazing house ;
All the dreadful deeds of old
Rise resurgent from the mould,
For their judgment peal is toll'd !
All our Future takes her stand
Hawk-like on thy lifted hand.
States that live not, vigil keeping
In the limbo of long weeping ;

Palace-courts and minster-towers
That shall make this isle of ours
Fairer than the star of morn,
Wait thy mandate to be born !
Chief elect 'mid desolation
Wield thou well the inspiration
Thou drawest from a new-born nation !

VII.

Sleep no longer Bards that hold
Ranged beneath me harps of gold !
Smite them with a heavier hand
Than vengeance lays on axe or brand !
Pour upon the blast a song
Linking litanies of wrong,
Till, like poison-dews, the strain
Eat into the Invader's brain.
On the retributive harp
Catch that death-shriek shrill and sharp,
Hers, though choked in blood, whose lord
Perish'd, Essex, at thy board !
Peerless chieftain ! peerless wife !
From his throat, and hers, the knife
Drain'd the mingled tide of life !
Sing the base assassin's steel
By Sussex hired to slay O'Neill !
Sing, fierce Bards, the plains sword-wasted,
Sing the cornfields burnt and blasted,
That when raged the war no longer
Kernes dog-chased might pine with hunger !
Pour around their ears the groans
Of half-human skeletons
From wet cave or forest-cover

Foodless deserts peering over,
 Or upon the roadside lying
 Infant dead and mother dying,
 On their mouth the grassy stain
 Of the wild weed gnaw'd in vain ;—
 Look upon them hoary Head
 Of the last of Desmonds dead ;
 Head that evermore dost frown
 From the Bridge of London down !
 She that slew him from her barge
 Makes that Head this hour the targe
 Of her insults cold and keen,
 England's Caliph, not her Queen !
 —Portent terrible and dire
 Whom thy country and thy sire
 Branded with a bastard's name,
 Thy birth was but thy lightest shame !
 To honour recreant and thine oath ;
 Trampling that Faith whose borrow'd garb
 First gave thee sceptre, crown, and orb,
 Thy flatterers scorn, thy lovers loathe
 That idol with the blood-stained feet
 Ill-throned on murder'd Mary's seat !

VIII.

Glory be to Him Alone who holds the nations in His hand !

The plain lies bare ; the smoke drifts by ; they fly—
 the invaders—band o'er band !

Sing, ye priests, your deep Te Deums ; bards, make
 answer loud and long

In your rapture flinging heavenward censers of
 triumphant song.

Isle for centuries blind in bondage lift once more
thine ancient boast,
From the cliffs of Inishowen southward on to
Carbery's coast !
We have seen the Right made perfect, seen the Hand
that rules the spheres
Glance like lightning through the clouds, and back-
ward roll the wrongful years.
Glory fadeth, but this triumph is no fleeting barren
glory ;
Rays of healing it shall scatter on the eyes that read
our story :
Upon nations bound and torpid as they waken it shall
shine
As on Peter in his chains the Angel shone with light
divine.
From the unheeding, from the unholy it may hide,
like Truth, its ray ;
But when Truth and Justice conquer on their crowns
its beam shall play :
O'er the ken of troubled despots it shall trail a meteor's
glare ;
For the blameless it shall glitter as the star of
morning fair :
Whensoever Erin triumphs then its dawn it shall
renew ;
Then O'Neill shall be remember'd, and Tirconnell's
chief, Red Hugh !

THE TRUE VICTORY.

A WARRIOR by his stone-dead lord
Fast bleeding sat, and heard on high

Three Angels making of a sword,
 Who sang right merrily :
 ‘ We shape the sword of conquering days :—
 What jewels shall that sword emboss ?
 Not deeds, but sufferings ; shame, not praise,
 The victories of the Cross.’

THE SUGANE EARL.

A.D. 1601.

I.

’Twas the White Knight that sold him—his flesh
 and his blood !

A Fitz-Gerald betray’d the Fitz-Gerald :
 Death-pale the false friend in the ’mid forest stood ;
 Close by stood the conqueror’s herald !
 At the cave-mouth he lean’d on his sword, pale and
 dumb,
 But the eye that was on him o’erbore him :
 ‘ Come forth,’ cried the White Knight ;—one
 answer’d, ‘ I come !’
 And the Chief of his House stood before him !

II.

‘ Cut him down,’ said the Outlaw with cold smile and
 stern,
 ‘ ’Twas a bold stake ; but Satan hath won it !’—
 In the days of thy father, Earl Desmond, no kerne
 Had heard that command, and not done it !
 The name of the White Knight shall cease, and his race !
 His castle down fall, roof and rafter !
 This day is a day of rebuke ; but the base
 Shall meet what he merits hereafter !

ORMOND'S LAMENT ;

OR, THE FOE TURNED FRIEND.

I.

THERE clung a mist about mine eye,
Or else round him a mist there clung :
From war to war the years went by,
And still that cloud between us hung :
That, that he was I saw him not,
Old friend, old comrade, fellow-man :
I saw but that which chance had wrought ;
A rival house, a hostile clan.

II.

In vain one Race, one Faith were ours :
A common Land, a common Foe :
Vainly we chased through Lorha's bowers,
In boyhood paired, the flying roe :
Sea-caves of Irr ! in vain by you
Our horses stemmed the heaving floods
While freshening gales of morning blew
The sunrise o'er the mountain woods !

III.

Ah spells of Fate ! Ah Wrath and Wrong !
Ah Friend that once my dearest wert !
Where lay thine image hid so long
But in the centre of my heart ?
Thou fell'st ! a flash from out the past
One moment showed thee as of yore :

Death followed fast—a midnight blast ;
And that fair crest was seen no more.

IV.

Ah, great right hand, so brave yet kind !
Ah, sovereign eyes ! ah, lordly mirth !
Thy realm to-day—like me—sits blind :
And endless winter chills thy hearth.
This day I see thee in thy spring,
Though seventy winters make me grey :
This night my bards thy praise shall sing :
This night for thee my priests shall pray.*

* In Ireland there were occasions when the chief who had pursued an ancient enemy to the death became his sincerest mourner. A chronicler of the seventeenth century affirms that an instance of such a change was found in the Earl of Ormond of Elizabeth's time, called 'Black Thomas.' 'Now, good reader, let there be a truce to words, and listen to the whistling of the lash.—. . . There was then in Ireland Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond, who changed his religion in the court of Elizabeth. Brooding over the scandal he had given by his apostacy, he resolved to be reconciled to the Church in his last days. He therefore made his peace with God, edified all by his piety, and soon after, losing the ineffable blessing of sight, was gathered to his fathers. Now, ere he died, he was heard to lament two actions of his life—first, that he had ever renounced that holy religion in his youth which in his old age he was not able to succour ; and, secondly, that he had taken up arms against the Geraldines of Desmond, who were ever the strenuous champions of the Faith, and the bulwarks of their country's liberty. Oh, good God ! why did Ormond conspire to ruin them ?'

(*'The Rise, Increase, and Exit of the Family of the Geraldines, Earls of Desmond, and Palatines of Kerry.'* Written in Latin by Brother Dominicus de Rosario O'Daly, in the seventeenth century, and translated by the Rev. C. P. Meahan.)

THE PHANTOM FUNERAL;

OR, THE DIRGE OF THE LAST DESMOND.

A.D. 1601.

James Fitz-Garret, son of the 'Great Earl of Desmond,' had been sent to England when a child as a hostage, and was for seventeen years kept a prisoner in the Tower, and educated in the Queen's religion. James Fitz-Thomas, the 'Sugane Earl,' having meantime assumed the title and prerogatives of Earl of Desmond, the Queen sent her captive to Ireland, attended by persons devoted to her, and provided with a *conditional* patent for his restoration. When he reached Kilmallock, on his way to Kerry, wheat and salt were there showered on him by the people, in testimony of loyalty. The next day was Sunday. When the young Earl left his house, it was with difficulty that a guard of English soldiers could keep a path open for him. From street and window and housetop every voice urged him to fidelity to his ancestral faith. The youth, who did not even understand the language in which he was adjured, having reached a spot where two roads separated, took that one which led to 'the Queen's church,' as it was called; and with loud cries his clan rushed forth from Kilmallock, and abandoned his standard for ever. Shortly afterwards he returned to England, where he fell sick; and in a few months the news of his death reached his ancient palatinate of Kerry.—See the *Pacata Hibernia*.

THE WAIL OF THE WOMEN OF DESMOND.

STREW the bed and strew the bier,
 (Who rests upon it was never man)
 With all that a little child holds dear,
 With violets blue and violets wan.

Strew the bed and strew the bier
 With the berries that redden thy shores, Corann:
 Lay not upon it helmet or spear:—
 He knew them never. He ne'er was man.

Far off he sleeps; yet we mourn him here;
 Their tale is falsehood! he ne'er was man!

'Tis a phantom funeral ! Strew the bier
With white lilies brushed by the floating swan.

They lie who say that the false Queen caught him
A child asleep on the mountains wide ;
A captive reared him ; a strange faith taught him ;—
'Twas for no strange faith that his father died !

They lie who say that the child return'd
A man unmanned to his towers of pride ;
That his people with curses the false Earl spurn'd ;
Woe, woe, Kilmallock ! they lie, and lied !

The Clan was wroth at an ill report,
But now the thunder-cloud melts in tears :
The child that was motherless play'd. 'Twas sport !
A child must sport in his childish years !

Ululah ! Ululah ! Low, sing low !
The women of Desmond loved well that child !
Our lamb was lost in the winter snow :
Long years we sought him in wood and wild.

How many a babe of Fitz-Gerald's blood
In hut was foster'd though born in hall !
The whole stock burgeon'd the fair new bud,
The old land welcomed them, each and all !

Glynn weeps to-day by the Shannon's tide,
And Shanid and she that frowns o'er Deal ;
There is woe by the Laune and the Carra's side,
And where the Knight dwells by the woody Feale.

In Dingle and Beara they chant his dirge ;
Far off he faded—our child—sing low !
We have made him a bed by the ocean's surge ;
We have made him a bier on the mountain's brow.

The Clan was bereft ! the old walls they left ;
With cries they rushed to the mountains drear !
But now great sorrow their heart hath cleft ;
See ! one by one they are drawing near !

Ululah ! Ululah ! Low, sing low !
The flakes fall fast on the little bier :
The yew-branch and eagle-plume over them throw !
The last of the Desmond Chiefs lies here.

THE MARCH TO KINSALE.

DECEMBER, A.D. 1601.

I.

O'ER many a river bridged with ice
Through many a vale with snow-drifts dumb
Past quaking fen and precipice
The Princes of the North are come !
Lo, these are they that, year by year,
Roll'd back the tide of England's war ;
Rejoice, Kinsale ! thy help is near !
That wondrous winter march is o'er.
And thus they sang, 'To-morrow morn '
Our eyes shall rest upon the foe :
Pass on, swift night, in silence borne,
And blow, thou breeze of sunrise, blow !'

II.

Blithe as a boy on march'd the host
With droning pipe and clear-voiced harp ;
At last above that southern coast
Rang out their war-steed's whinny sharp :

And up the sea-salt slopes they wound,
And airs once more of ocean quaff'd ;
Those frosty woods, the blue wave's bound,
As though May touched them waved and laugh'd.
And thus they sang, ' To-morrow morn
Our eyes shall rest upon our foe :
Pass on, swift night, in silence borne,
And blow, thou breeze of sunrise, blow ! '

III.

Beside their watchfires couch'd all night
Some slept, some danced, at cards some play'd,
While, chanting on a central height
Of moonlit crag, the priesthood pray'd :
And some to sweetheart, some to wife
Sent message kind ; while others told
Triumphant tales of recent fight,
Or legends of their sires of old.
And thus they sang, ' To-morrow morn
Our eyes at last shall see the foe :
Roll on, swift night, in silence borne,
And blow, thou breeze of sunrise, blow ! '

KINSALE.

JANUARY 3, A.D. 1602.

WHAT man can stand amid a place of tombs
Nor yearn to that poor vanquished dust beneath ?
Above a Nation's grave no violet blooms ;
A vanquished Nation lies in endless death.

'Tis past: the dark is dense with ghost and vision !
 All lost ! the air is throng'd with moan and wail :
 But one day more and hope had been fruition :
 O Athunree, thy fate o'erhung Kinsale !*

What name is that which lays on every head
 A hand like fire, striking the strong locks grey ?
 What name is named not save with shame and dread ?
 Once let us breathe it,—then no more for aye !

Kinsale ! accursed be he, the first who bragg'd
 ' A city stands where roam'd but late the flock ;'
 Accursed the day when, from the mountain dragg'd,
 Thy corner-stone forsook the mother-rock !

* The inexplicable disaster at Kinsale, when, after their marvellous winter march, the two great Northern chiefs of Tironnell and Tyrone had succeeded in relieving their Spanish allies there, was one of those events upon which the history of a nation turns. We know little more than that it was a night-attack, the secret of which had been divulged by a deserter. O'Donnell took shipping for Spain, where he died before the promised aid was furnished, in the twenty-ninth year of his age, September 10, 1602. King Philip caused him to be buried in the Cathedral of Valladolid, and raised there a monument in his honour. O'Neill fought his way back to Ulster. Lord Mountjoy had repeatedly wasted the country, so that a terrible famine reigned. Every day O'Neill was more strictly hemmed in ; while his allies deserted him and his retainers were starved. When the news arrived of the death of Red Hugh O'Donnell all hope was over. He agreed to the terms proposed to him by Mountjoy, surrendering his claims as a native prince, and engaging to resume his title as Earl of Tyrone. Several days previously the Queen had died ; but Mountjoy had concealed this event. A few days later the ships of O'Neill's Spanish allies arrived. He sent them back.

ROISIN DUBH.

DIRGE.

I.

I AM black but fair, and the robe I wear
Is dark as death ;
My cheek is pale, and I bind my veil
With a cypress wreath.
Where the nightshades flower I build the bower
Of my secret rest :
O kind is sleep to the eyes that weep
And the bleeding breast.

II.

My palace floor I tread no more ;
No throne is mine ;
No sceptre I hold, nor drink from gold
Of victory's wine ;
Yet I rule a Queen in the worlds unseen
By Sassanach eye ;
A realm I have in the hearts of the brave
And an empery.

TO NUALA IN ROME.

Nuala was the sister of Red Hugh, and of Roderick O'Donnell. The latter died an exile in Rome, A.D. 1608. Nuala left her husband, on his proving a traitor to his country, and gave to her brother. It was on finding her weeping at that brother's grave in S. Pietro Montorio, that O'Donnell's bard addressed to her the tragic ode well known through Clarence Mangan's translation : 'O Woman of the Piercing Wail !'

THY shining eyes are vague with tears
Though seldom and unseen they flow ;
The playmate of thy childish years—
My friend—at last lies low.

If I, thus late, thy love might win
Withheld for his sake, brief the gain ;
I live in battle's ceaseless din :
Thou pinest in silent pain.

Nuala ! exile, and the bread
By strangers doled thy cheek make pale ;
On blue Lough Eirne that cheek was red,
In western Ruaidh's gale !

The high-neck'd stag looks down no more
From sunset cliffs upon thy path
In Doire. Not now thou tread'st the shore
By Aileach's royal Rath.

No more thou hear'st the sea-wind sing
O'er cairns where Ulster monarchs sleep ;
The linnets of the Latian spring
They only make thee weep.

To thee no joy from domes enskied,
Or ruins of Imperial Rome ;
Thou look'st beyond them, hungry-eyed,
T'ward thy far Irish home.

On green Tirconnell, now a waste,
The sighs of outcasts feed thine own ;
Nuala ! soon my clarion's blast
Shall drown that mingled moan.

In Spain they call us King and Prince,
And plight alliance, and betray ;

In Rome, through clouds of frankincense
Slow dawns our better day.

To King or Kaiser, Prince or Pope
I sue not, nor to magic spell ;
Nuala ! on this sword my Hope
Stands like a God. Farewell !

THE ARRAIGNMENT ;

OR, FIRST AND LAST.

THUS sang thy missioned Bard, O'Neill,
At James's Court a threatening guest,
When Ulster died. Round ranks of steel
Ran the sharp whisper ill suppressed.

Ho ! space for Judgment ! squire and groom !
Ho ! place for Judgment—and a bier !
We bear a dead man to his tomb :
We ask for Judgment, not a tear.

Back, beaming eyes, and cloth of gold,
Back, plumes, and stars, and herald's gear,
Injustice crowned, and falsehood stoled !
There lies a lordlier pageant here !

Draw near, Sir King, and lay thy hand
Upon this dead man's breast ! Draw near !
The accusing blood, at God's command,
Wells forth ! The count is summed. Give ear !

Who, partner with a knave abhorred,*
Farmed as his own that Traitor's feud ?
Vicarious fought ? By others' sword
Mangled a kingdom unsubdued ?

Who reigned in great Religion's name,
Liegeman and Creedsman of the Pope ?
Who vindicates his cleric claim
By schism and rapine, axe and rope ?

Who reads by light of blazing roofs
His gospel new to Prince and Kerne ?
Who tramples under horses' hoofs
A race expatriate, slow to learn ?

From holy Ulster, last discrowned—
'Twas falsehood did the work, not war—
Who drives her sons by scourge and hound
To famished Connacht's utmost shore ?

Beware false splendours brave to-day !
Unkingly King, and recreant peers !
Ye hold your prey ; but not for aye :
The hour is yours : but ours the years !

* Dermot, King of Leinster, A.D. 1170.

*THE SUPPRESSION OF THE FAITH IN
ULSTER.*

A BARDIC ODE.

A.D. 1623.

Throughout Ulster, and in most parts of Ireland, it had been found impossible to carry the Penal Laws against the Catholic faith fully into effect until the reign of James I. The accession of that prince was hailed as the beginning of an era of liberty and peace. James had ever boasted himself a descendant of the ancient Milesian princes, had had frequent dealings with the Irish chiefs in their wars against Elizabeth, and was believed by them to be, at least in heart, devoted to the religion of his Mother. In the earlier part of his reign, though he refused to grant a legal toleration, he engaged that the Penal Laws should not be executed. In the year 1605 a proclamation was issued, commanding all Catholic priests to quit Ireland under the penalty of death. Next came the compulsory flight of Tirconnell and Tyrone, the Plantation of Ulster, and the swamping of the Irish Parliament by the creation of fictitious boroughs. In 1622 Archbishop Ussher preached before the new Deputy, Lord Faulkland, his celebrated sermon on the text, 'He beareth not the sword in vain.' The next year a new proclamation was published, commanding the departure of all the Catholic clergy, regular and secular, within forty days.

I.

Now we know that they are dead !
 They, the Chiefs that kept from scaith
 The northern land—the sentenced Faith—
 Now we know that they are dead !

II.

Wrong, with Rapine in her leash,
 Walk'd her ancient rounds afresh !
 Law—late come—with leaden mace
 Smites Religion in the face ;—
 But the spoiler first had place !

III.

Axes and hammers, hot work and hard !

From niche and from turret the Saints they cast ;
The church stands naked as the churchyard ;

The craftsman-army toils fiercely and fast :
They pluck from the altars the precious stones

As vultures pluck at a dead man's eyes ;
Like wolves down-dragging the flesh from the bones

They strip the gold from the canopies.

They rifle the tombs ; they melt the bells :

The foundry furnace bubbles and swells !—

Spoiler, for once thou hast err'd ; what ho !

Thou hast loos'd this shaft from an ill-strung bow !

In that Faith thou wouldst strangle, thy Mother died !

Who slew her ? The Usurper our chiefs defied !

Thy heart was with Rome in the days of old ;

Thy counsel was ours ; thy counsel and gold !

IV.

A ban went forth from the regal chambers,

From the Prince that courted us once with lies,

From the secular synods where he who clambers,

Not he that walks upright, receives the prize :

'Go back to thy Judah, sad Prophet, go ;

There wail thy wrong, and denounce thy woe ;

But no longer in Bethel thy prophecy sing,

'Tis the chapel and court of Samaria's King !'

—Let England renounce her church at will,

The children of Erin are faithful still.

For a thousand years has that church been theirs :—

They are God's, not Cæsar's, the Creeds and Prayers !

V.

Thou that are haughty and full of bread,
 The crown falls soon from the unwise head !
 Who rear strange altars shall find anon
 The lion thereby and sea-sand thereon !
 In the deserts of penance they peak and pine
 Till fulfilled are the days of the wrath divine.
 Thy covenant make with the cave and the brier
 For shelter by day and by night for fire ;
 When the bolt is launch'd at the craggy crest,
 And the cedars flame round the eagle's nest !

VI.

A voice from the ocean waves,
 And a voice from the forest glooms,
 And a voice from old temples and kingly graves,
 And a voice from the Catacombs !
 It cries, the king that warreth
 On religion and freedom entwined in one
 Down drags in his blindness the fane, nor spareth
 The noble's hall, nor the throne !
 I saw in my visions the walls give way
 Of the mystic Babylon ;
 I saw the gold Idol whose feet are clay
 On his forehead lying prone ;
 I saw a sea-eagle defaced with gore
 Flag wearily over the main ;
 But her nest on the cliff she reached no more
 For the shaft was in her brain.
 As when some strong man a stone uplifteth
 And flingeth into floods far down,
 So God, when the balance of Justice shifteth,
 Down dasheth the despot's crown,

Down dasheth the realm that abused its trust,
 And the nation that knew not pity,
 And maketh the image of Power unjust
 To vanish from out the city !

VII.

Wait, my country, and be wise ;—
 Thou art gall'd in head and breast,
 Rest thou needest, sleep and rest ;
 Rest and sleep, and thou shalt rise
 And tread down thine enemies.
 That which God ordains is best ;
 That which God permits is good,
 Though by man least understood.
 Now His sword He gives to those
 Who have wisdom won from woes ;
 In them fighting ends the strife :
 At other times the impious priest
 Slipping on his victim's blood
 Falls in death on his own knife !
 God is hard to 'scape ! His ire !
 Strikes the son if not the sire ! *
 In a time, to God not long,
 Thou shalt reckon with this wrong !

* King James I.'s 'Plantation of Ulster' was the loss of Ireland to his son, and again to his grandson, and consequently the permanent loss to him and his of England.

KING CHARLES'S 'GRACES.'

A.D. 1626.

I.

THUS babble the strong ones, 'The chain is slacken'd !
Ye can turn half round on your side to sleep !
With the thunder-cloud still your isle is blacken'd ;
But it hurls no bolt upon tower or steep.
Ye are slaves in name : old laws proscribe you ;
But the King is kindly, the Queen is fair ;
They are knaves or fools who would goad or bribe
you
A legal freedom to claim ! Beware !'

II.

WE answer thus : our country's honour
To us is dear as our country's life !
That stigma the foul law casts upon her
Is the brand on the fame of a blameless wife !
Once more we answer : from honour never
Can safety long time be found apart :
The bondsman that vows not his bond to sever,
Is a slave by right and a slave in heart !

SIBYLLA IERNENSIS.

I.

I DREAM'D. Great bells around me peal'd ;
The world in that sad chime was drown'd ;
Sharp cries as from a battle-field
Were strangled in that wondrous sound :

Had all the Kings of earth lain dead,
Had nations borne them lapp'd in lead
To torch-lit vaults with plume and pall,
Such bells had served for funeral.

II.

'Twas work of phantasy ! I slept
Where black Baltard o'erlooks the deep ;
Plunging all night the billows kept
Their ghostly vigil round my sleep.
But I had fed on tragic lore
That day—your annals, ' Masters Four ! '
And every moan of wind and sea
Was as a funeral chime to me.

III.

I woke. In vain the skylark sang
Above the breezy cliff ; in vain
The golden iris flashed and swang
In hollows of the sea-pink plain.
As ocean shakes—no longer near—
The listening heart, and haunts the ear,
The Sibyl and that volume's spells
Pursued me with those funeral bells !

IV.

The Irish Sibyl whispers slow
To one who pass'd her tardy Lent
In purple and fine linen, ' Lo !
Thou would'st amend—but not repent !
Beware ! Long prospers fearless crime ;
Half courses bring the perilous time !
His way who changes, not his will,
Is strong no more, but guilty still.'

*THE BALLAD OF 'BONNY PORTMORE';**

OR, THE WICKED REVENGE.

A.D. 1641.

I.

SHALL I breathe it? Hush! 'twas dark :—

Silence!—few could understand :—

Needful deeds are done—not told.

In your ear a whisper! Hark!

'Twas a sworn, unwavering band

Marching through the midnight cold;

Rang the frost plain, stiff and stark :

By us, blind, the river rolled.

II.

Silence! we were silent then :

Shall we boast and brag to-day?

Just deeds, blabbed, have found their price!

Snow made dumb the trusty glen;

Now and then a starry ray

Showed the floating rafts of ice :

Worked our oath in heart and brain :

Twice we halted : only twice.

III.

When we reached the city wall

On their posts the warders slept :

By the moat the rushes plained :

Hush! I tell you part, not all!

Through the water-weeds we crept ;

Soon the sleepers' tower was gained.

My sister's son a tear let fall—

Righteous deeds by tears are stained.

* The name of an old Irish air.

IV.

Round us lay a sleeping city :
Had they wakened we had died :
Innocence sleeps well, they say.
Pirates, traitors, base banditti,
Blood upon their hands undried,
'Mid their spoils asleep they lay !
Murderers ! Justice murders pity !
Night had brought their Judgment Day !

V.

In the castle, here and there,
'Twixt us and the dawning East
Flashed a light, or sank by fits :
'Patience, brothers ! sin it were
Lords to startle at their feast,
Sin to scare the dancers' wits !'
Patient long in forest lair
The listening, fire-eyed tiger sits !

VI.

O the loud flames upward springing !
O that first fierce yell within,
And, without, that stormy laughter !
Like rooks across a sunset winging
Dark they dashed through glare and din
Under rain of beam and rafter !
O that death-shriek heavenward ringing ;
O that wondrous silence after !

The fire-glare showed, 'mid glaze and blister,
A boy's cheek wet with tears. 'Twas base !
That boy was firstborn of my sister ;
Yet I smote him on the face !

Ah ! but when the poplars quiver
In the hot noon, cold o'erhead,
Sometimes with a spasm I shiver ;
Sometimes round me gaze with dread.
Ah ! and when the silver willow
Whitens in the moonlight gale,
From my hectic, grassy pillow
I hear, sometimes, that infant's wail !

*THE INTERCESSION.**

ULSTER.

A.D. 1641.

* Dr. Leland and other historians relate that the Catholic clergy frequently interfered for the protection of the victims of that massacre, which took place at an early period of the Ulster rising of 1641. They hid them beneath their altars. From the landing of Owen Roe O'Neill all such crimes ceased. They disgraced a just cause, and, doubtless, drew down a Divine punishment. A lamentable list of the massacres committed in the same year, at *the other side*—massacres less generally known—will be found in Cardinal Moran's 'Persecutions suffered by the Catholics under Cromwell and the Puritans,' p. 168. It is compiled from a contemporary record.

It was intended that Inisfail should represent in the main the songs of the old Irish Bards (if only they could have been preserved), as the best exponent of the Emotions and Imagination of the Race during the centuries of her affliction, but there must have been also many Priests, like Iriel, who were exponents not less true of the Conscience of that Race. To such may be attributed the counsels urged upon them in many parts of Inisfail, and especially towards its close, respecting the forgiveness of injuries, obedience to the Divine Will, Penitence, especially from p. 125 to p. 129 a Hope that nothing could subdue, and those trials connected with the day of Prosperity which are more dangerous than any which Adversity knows.

IRIEL the Priest arose and said :

‘ The just cause never shall prosper by wrong !
The ill cause battens on blood ill shed ;
’Tis Virtue only makes Justice strong.

‘ I have hidden the Sassanach’s wife and child
Beneath the altar ; behind the porch ;
O’er them that believe not these hands have piled
The copes and the vestments of Holy Church !

‘ I have hid three men in a hollow oak ;
I have hid three maids in an ocean cave : ’
As though he were lord of the thunder-stroke
The old Priest lifted his hand—to save.

But the people loved not the words he spake ;
And their face was changed for their heart was
sore :
They spake no word ; but their brows grew black
And the hoarse halls roar’d like a torrent’s roar.

‘ Has the Stranger robb’d you of house and land ?
In battle meet him and smite him down !
Has he sharpen’d the dagger ? Lift ye the brand !
Has he bound your Princes ? Set free the clown !

‘ Has the Stranger his country and knighthood
shamed ?
Though he ’scape God’s vengeance so shall not ye !
His own God chastens ! Be never named
With the Mullaghmast slaughter ! Be just and
free ! ’

But the people received not the words he spake,
For the wrong on their heart had made it sore ;

And their brows grew black like the stormy rack
And the hoarse halls roar'd like the wave-wash'd
shore.

Then Iriel the Priest put forth a curse !
And horror crept o'er them from vein to vein ;—
A curse upon man and a curse upon horse,
As forth they rode to the battle-plain.

And there never came to them luck or grace
No Saint in the battle-field help'd them more
Till O'Neill who hated the warfare base
Had landed at Doe on Tirconnell's shore.

*THE SILK OF THE KINE.**

DIRGE OF RORY O'MORE.

A.D. 1642.

Up the sea-sadden'd valley at evening's decline
A heifer walks lowing ; 'the Silk of the Kine ;'
From the deep to the mountain she roams, and again
From the mountain's green urn to the purple-rimm'd
main.

Whom seek'st thou, sad Mother ? Thine own is not
thine !

He dropp'd from the headland ; he sank in the brine.
'Twas a dream ! but in dream at thy foot did he
follow

Through the meadow-sweet on by the marish and
mallow !

* One of the mystical names for Ireland used by the Bards.

Was he thine? Have they slain him? Thou seek'st
 him, not knowing
 Thyself too art theirs, thy sweet breath and sad
 lowing!
 Thy gold horn is theirs; thy dark eye, and thy silk!
 And that which torments thee, thy milk, is their milk!
 'Twas no dream, Mother Land! 'Twas no dream,
 Inisfail!
 Hope dreams, but grief dreams not—the grief of the
 Gael!
 From Leix and Ikerren to Donegal's shore
 Rolls the dirge of thy last and thy bravest—O'More!

THE BATTLE OF BENBURB.

A BARDIC ODE.

This battle was won by Owen Roe O'Neill over the Parliamentary forces, A.D. 1646. The rebels left 3,423 of their dead on the field.

I.

At even I mused on the wrong of the Gael;—
 A storm rushed beside me with war-blast not wail,
 And the leaves of the forest plague-spotted and dead
 Like a multitude broken before it fled;
 Then I saw in my visions a host back driven
 Ye clansmen be true, by a Chief from heaven!

II.

At midnight I gazed on the moonless skies;—
 There glisten'd, supreme of star-blazonries,
 A Sword all stars; then heaven, I knew,
 Hath holy work for a sword to do:
 Be true, ye clansmen of Nial! Be true!

III.

At morning I look'd as the sun uprose
On hills of Antrim late white with snows ;
Was it morning only that dyed them red ?
Martyr'd hosts, methought, had bled
On their sanguine ridges for years not few !
Ye clansmen of Conn, this day be true !

IV.

There is felt once more on the earth
The step of a kingly man :
Like a dead man hidden he lay from his birth,
Exiled from his country and clan :
This day his standard he flingeth forth ;
He tramples the bond and ban :
Let them look in his face that usurp'd his hearth !
Let them vanquish him, they who can !
Owen Roe, our own O'Neill !
He treads once more our land !
The sword in his hand is of Spanish steel,
But the hand is an Irish hand !

V.

I saw in old time with these eyes that fail *
The ship drop down Lough Swilly ;
Lessening 'mid billows the snowy sail
Bent down like a storm-rock'd lily !

* In 1607 a conspiracy, never proved, and probably never undertaken, was suddenly charged against Tyrone and Tircónnell. To avoid arrest the two earls, whose enforced submission had rendered them helpless, embarked on board a ship that chanced to have anchored in Lough Swilly. They found refuge in Rome, where their tombs are shown to the traveller in the church of San Pietro, on the Janiculan Hill.

The Four Masters thus record the tragedy :—‘ They embarked

Far, far it bore them, those Sceptres old
That ruled o'er Ulster for ages untold,
The sceptre of Nial and the sceptre of Conn,
Thy Princes, Tirconnell and green Tyrone !
No freight like that since the mountain-pine
Left first the hills for the salt sea-brine !
Down sank on the ocean a blood-red sun
As westward they drifted, when hope was none,
With their priests and their children o'er ocean's
foam
And every archive of house and home :
Amid the sea-surges their bards sang dirges :
God rest their bones in their graves at Rome !
Owen Roe, our own O'Neill !
He treads once more our land !
The sword in his hand is of Spanish steel,
But the hand is an Irish hand !

VI.

I saw in old time through the drifts of the snow
A shepherdless People dash'd to and fro,
With hands toss'd up in the wintry air,
With the laughter of madness or shriek of despair.
Dispersed is the flock when the shepherd lies low :
The sword was of parchment : a lie was the blow :

on the festival of Holy Cross, in autumn. This was a princely company : and it is certain that the sea has not borne and the wind has not wafted in modern times a number of persons in one ship more eminent, illustrious, or noble in race, heroic deeds, valour, feats of arms, and brave achievements than they. Would that God had but permitted them to remain in their patrimonial inheritance until the children had arrived at the age of manhood ! Woe to the heart that meditated, woe to the counsel that recommended the project of this expedition !

What is Time? I can see the rain beat the white
hair,

And the sleet that defaces the face that was fair,
As onward they stagger o'er mountain and moor
From the Ardes and Rathlin to Corrib's bleak shore ;
I can hear the babe weep in the pause of the wind—
'To Connaught!' The bloodhounds are baying be-
hind!—

Owen Roe, our own O'Neill !

He treads once more our land !

The sword in his hand is of Spanish steel,

But the hand is an Irish hand !

VII.

Visions no more of the dreadful past !
The things that I long'd for are mine at last !
I see them and hold them with heart and eyes ;
On Irish ground, under Irish skies,
An Irish army, clan by clan,
The standard of Ulster on leading the van !
Each chief with his clansmen, tried men like steel ;
Unvanquish'd Maolmora, Cormac the leal !
And the host that meets them right well I know,
The psalm-singing boors of that Scot, Munro !
—We hated you, Barons of the Pale !
But now sworn friends are Norman and Gael ;
For both the old foes are of lineage old,
And both the old Faith and old manners hold.
Montgomery, Conway ! base-born crew !
This day ye shall learn an old lesson anew !
Thou art red with sunset this hour, Blackwater
But twice ere now thou wert red with slaughter !
Another O'Neill by the ford they met ;
And 'the bloody loaming' men name it yet !

Owen Roe, our own O'Neill !
He treads once more our land !
The sword in his hand is of Spanish steel !
But the hand is an Irish hand !

VIII.

The storm of the battle rings out ! On ! on !
Shine well in their faces, thou setting sun !
The smoke grows crimson : from left to right
Swift flashes the spleenful and racing light :
The horses stretch forward with belly to ground :
On ! on ! like a lake which has burst its bound !
Through the clangour of brands rolls the laughter of
cannon :

Wind-borne it shall reach thine old walls, Dun-
gannon !

Armagh's grey Minster shall chant again
To-morrow at vespers an ancient strain !
On, on ! This night on thy banks, Loch Neagh
Men borne in bondage shall couch them free !
On, warriors launch'd by a warrior's hand !
Four years ye were leash'd in a brazen band ;
He counted your bones, and he meted your might,
This hour he dashes you into the fight !
Strong sun of the battle, great Chief whose eye
Wherever it gazes makes victory,
This hour thou shalt see them do or die !

—They form : there stand they one moment, still !

Now, now, they charge under banner and sign :
They breast unbroken the slope of the hill,

It breaks before them, the Invaders' line !
Their horse and their foot are crush'd together
Like harbour-locked ships in the winter weather,
Each dash'd upon each, the churn'd wave strewing

With wreck upon wreck, and ruin on ruin.
 The spine of their battle gives way with a yell :
 Down drop their standards : that cry was their knell !
 Some on the bank and some in the river
 Struggling they lie that shall rally never.
 'Twas God fought for us ! with hands of might
 From on high He kneaded and shaped the fight !
 To Him be the praise ! What He wills must be :
 With Him is the future : for blind are we !
 Let Ormond at will make terms or refuse them !
 Let Charles the Confederates win or lose them ;
 Unbind the old Faith and annul the old strife,
 Or cheat us, and forfeit his kingdom and life !
 Come hereafter what must or may
 Ulster, thy cause is avenged to-day :
 What fraud took from us and force, the sword
 That strikes in daylight makes ours, restored !
 Owen Roe, our own O'Neill !
 He treads once more our land !
 The sword in his hand is of Spanish steel,
 But the hand is an Irish hand !

TRADITOR ISTE.

A WAIL.

I.

CAN it be, can it be ? Can our Great One be
 Traitor ?
 Can the child of her greatest be faithless to Eire ?

The clown and the stranger have wronged—let them
hate her !

Old Thomond well knows them ; they hate her
for hire !

Can a brave man be leagued with the rebels and
ranters

'Gainst his faith, and his country, his king, and
his race,

Can he bear the low moanings, the curses, the
banter?—

There's a scourge worse than these—the applause
of the base !

II.

Was the hand that set fire to the Churches de-
scended

From his hand who upreared them—the strong
hand, the true ?

When the blood of the People and Priesthood ran
blended

Who was it looked on, and cried, 'Spare them
not' ? Who ?

Some Fury o'erruled thee ! Some root thou hadst
eaten !

'Twas a Demon that stalked in thy shape. 'Twas
not thou !

Not tears of the Angels that blood-stain can
sweeten ;

That Cain-mark not death can erase from thy
brow !

DIRGE OF OWEN ROE O'NEILL.

A.D. 1649.

So, 'tis over ! Lift the dead !
Bear him to his place of rest,
Broken heart, and blighted head :
Lay the Cross upon his breast.

There be many die too late ;
Here is one that died too soon : *
'Twas not Fortune—it was Fate
After him that cast her shoon.

Toll the church bells slowly : toll !
God this day is wroth with Eire :
Seal the book, and fold the scroll ;
Crush the harp, and burst the wire.

Lords and priests, ye talked and talked
In Kilkenny's Council Hall ;
But this man whose game ye baulked
Was the one man 'mong you all !

'Twas not in the field he fell !
Sing his requiem, dark-stoled choir !
Let a nation sound his knell :
God this day is wroth with Eire !

* The conqueror of Benburb died (by poison as was believed at the time) just after he and Ormond had concluded terms for joint action against Cromwell. Had he not been summoned to Kilkenny when on the point of following up the victory of Benburb, the Puritan army must, within a few days, have been driven out of Ulster.

THE BISHOP OF ROSS.

A.D. 1650.

THEY led him to the peopled wall :
‘ Thy sons ! ’ they said, ‘ are those within !
If at thy word their standards fall,
Thy life and freedom thou shalt win ! ’

Then spake that warrior Bishop old,
‘ Remove these chains that I may bear
My crosier staff and cope of gold :
My judgment then will I declare. ’

They robed him in his robes of state :
They set his mitre on his head :
On tower and gate was silence great :
The hearts that loved him froze with dread.

He spake : ‘ Right holy is your strife !
Fight for your Country, King, and Faith.
I taught you to be true in life :
I teach you to be true in death.

‘ A priest apart by God is set
To offer prayer and sacrifice :
And he is sacrificial yet
The pontiff for his flock who dies. ’

Ere yet he fell, his hand on high
He raised, and benediction gave ;
Then sank in death, content to die :
Thy great heart, Erin, was his grave.

DIRGE.

A.D. 1652.

I.

WHOSE were they those voices? What footsteps
came near me?

Can the dead to the living draw nigh and be
heard?

I wept in my sleep; but ere morning to cheer me
Came a breeze from the woodland, a song from the
bird.

O sons of my heart! the long-hair'd, the strong-
handed!

Your phantoms rush by me with war-cry and
wail:

Ye too for your Faith and your Country late banded
My sons by adoption, mail'd knights of the Pale!

II.

Is there sorrow, O ye that pass by, like my sorrow?
Of the Kings I brought forth there remaineth not
one!

Each day is dishonour'd; disastrous each morrow:

In the yew-wood I couch till the daylight is done.
At midnight I lean from the cliff o'er the waters,

And hear, as the thunder comes up from the sea
Your moanings, my sons, and your wailings, my
daughters:

With the sea-dirge they mix not: they clamour to
me!

THE WHEEL OF AFFLICTION.

BRIGHT is the Dream-land of them that weep ;
Of the outcast head on the mountains bare :
Thy Saints, O Eire, I have seen in sleep ;
Thy Queens on the battle-plain, fierce yet fair.

Three times I dreamed on Tyrawley's shore :
Through ranks of the Vanished I paced a mile :
On the right stood Kings, and their crowns they
wore :
On the left stood Priests without gold or guile.

But the vision I saw when the deep I crossed,
When I crossed from Iorras to Donegal
By night on the vigil of Pentecost
Was the saddest vision yet best of all.

From the sea to the sky a Wheel rolled round :
It breathed a blast on the steadfast stars ;
'Twas huge as that circle with marvels wound—
The marvels that reign o'er the Calendars.

Then an Angel spake, 'That Wheel is Earth ;
It grinds the wheat of the Bread of God :'
And the Angel of Eire, with an Angel's mirth,
'The mill-stream from Heaven is the Martyrs'
blood.'

EPILOGUE.

LIKE dew from above it fell, from beyond the limits
of ether ;
From above the courses of stars, and the thrones of
angelical choirs ;

‘If God afflicts the Land, then God of a surety is
with her ;

Her heart-drops counts like beads, and walks with
her through the fires.

‘Time, and a Time, and Times ! Earth’s noblest
birth was her latest :

That latest birth was Man ; his flesh her Redeemer
wears :

Time, and a Time, and Times ! one day the least
shall be greatest :

In glory God reaps, but sows below in the valley
of tears.’

It was no Seraph’s song nor the spherical chime of
creation,

That Voice ! To earth it stooped as a cloud to the
ocean flood :

It had ascended in sighs from the anguished heart of
a nation ;—

The musical echo came back from the boundless
bosom of God.

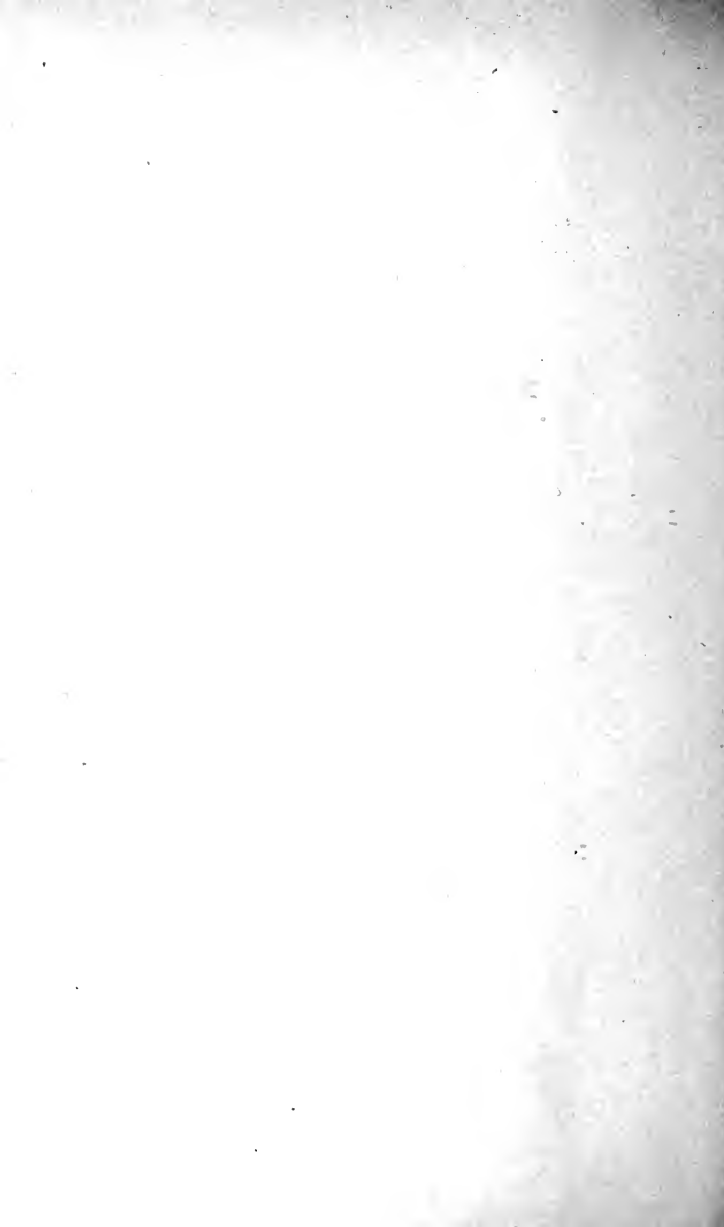
INISFAIL

A LYRICAL CHRONICLE OF IRELAND.

THE ELEGY.

PART III.

1. THE PENAL LAWS.
2. THE VICTORY OF ENDURANCE.



PART III.

Prologue.

PARVULI EJUS.

IN the night, in the night, O my Country, the stream
calls out from afar :

So swells thy voice through the ages, sonorous
and vast :

IN the night, in the night, O my Country, clear flashes
the star :

So flashes on me thy face through the gloom of the
past.

I sleep not ; I watch : in blows the wind ice-wing'd,
and ice-finger'd :

My forehead it cools and slakes the fire in my
breast ;

Though it sighs o'er the plains where oft thine exiles
look'd back, and long linger'd,

And the graves where thy famish'd lie dumb and
thine outcasts find rest.

For up from those vales wherein thy brave and thy
beautiful moulder,

And on through the homsteads waste and the
temples defiled,

A voice goes forth on that wind, as old as the Islands
and older,
'God reigns : at His feet earth's Destiny sleeps
like a child.'

IN RUIN RECONCILED.

A.D. 1660.

I HEARD a Woman's voice that wailed
Between the sandhills and the sea :
The famished sea-bird past me sailed
Into the dim infinity.

I saw on boundless rainy moors
Far off I saw a great Rock loom ;
The grey dawn smote its iron doors ;
And then I knew it for a Tomb.

Two queenly shapes before the grate
Watched, couchant on the barren ground ;
Two regal Shades in ruined state,
One Gael ; one Norman ; both discrowned.

THE CHANGED MUSIC.

I.

THE shock of meeting clans is o'er :
The knightly or the native shout
Pursues no more by field or shore
From rath to cairne, the ruined rout.

O'er dusty stalls old banners trail
In mouldering fanes : while far beneath
At last the Norman and the Gael
Lie wedded in the caves of death.

II.

No more the Bard-song ! dead the strains
That mixed defiance, grief, and laugh :
Old legends haunt no more the plains,
Half saintly and barbaric half.
Changed is the music. Sad and slow
Beyond the horizon's tearful verge
The elegiac wailings flow
The fragments of the broken dirge.

THE MINSTREL OF THE LATER DAY.

I.

WHAT art thou, O thou Loved and Lost
That, fading from me, leav'st me bare ?
The last trump of a vanquished host
Far off expiring on the air
So cheats in death the listener's ear
As thou dost cheat this aching heart :—
To me thy Past looked strangely near ;
Distant and dim seems that thou art.

II.

O Eire ! the things I loved in thee
Were dead long years ere I was born :

Yet still their shadows lived for me
 An evening twilight like the morn ;
 But daily now with vulgarer hand
 The Present sweeps those phantoms by :—
 Like annals of an alien land
 Thy history's self appears to die.

ODE.

THE 'CURSE OF CROMWELL' ;

OR, THE DESOLATION OF THE WEST.

IN trance I roamed that Land forlorn,
 By battle first, then famine worn ;
 I walked in gloom and dread :
 The Land remained : the hills were there :
 The vales : but few remained to share
 That realm untenanted.

Far-circling wastes, far-bending skies ;
 Clouds as at Nature's obsequies
 Slow trailing scarf and pall :
 In whistling winds on creaked the crane :
 Grey lakes upstared from moor and plain
 Like eyes on God that call.

Turn where I might, no blade of green
 Diversified the tawny scene :
 Bushless the waste, and bare :
 A dusky red the hills as though
 Some deluge ebbing years ago
 Had left but seaweed there.

Dark red the vales : that single hue
O'er rotting swamps an aspect threw
 Monotonous yet grand :
Long-feared—for centuries in decay—
Like a maimed lion there it lay,
 What once had been a Land.

Yet, day by day, as dropt the sun
A furnace glare through vapours dun
 Illumed each mountain's head :
Old tower and keep their crowns of flame
That hour assumed ; old years of shame
 Like fiends exorcised, fled.

That hour, from sorrow's trance awaking,
My soul, like day from darkness breaking
 With might prophetic fired
To those red hills and setting suns
Returned antiphonal response
 As gleam by gleam expired.

And in my spirit grew and gathered
Knowledge that Ireland's worst was weathered
 Her last dread penance paid ;
Conviction that for earthly scath
In world-wide victories of her Faith
 Atonement should be made.

That hour as one who walks in vision
Of God's 'New Heavens' I had fruition
 And saw, and inly burned :
And I beheld the multitude
Of those whose robes were washed in blood
 Saw chains to sceptres turned !

And I saw Thrones, and Seers thereon
Judging, and Tribes like snow that shone
And diamond towers high-piled,
Towers of that City theirs at last
Through tribulations who have passed,
And theirs, the undefiled.

A Land became a Monument !
Man works ; but God's concealed intent
Converts his worst to best :
The first of Altars was a Tomb—
Ireland ! thy grave-stone shall become
God's Altar in the West !

PEACE.

SERAPH that from the blue abyss
O'erlook'st the storms round earth that roll
While we, by fragments wildered, miss
The dread perfection of the whole
Draw near at last ! A moment lean
Upon that earth's tumultuous breast
Thy hand heart-healing, and serene
And grant the anguished planet rest !

*THE BALLAD OF THE LADY TURNED
BEGGAR.*

The Irish who fought for Charles I., and whose estates were confiscated on that account, looked in vain, with a few exceptions, for their restoration on the accession of Charles II. The widow of one of these Royalists, Lord Roche, in her old age used to be seen begging in the streets of Cork.

I.

‘Drop an alms on shrunken fingers,’ faintly with a smile she said ;
But the smile was not of pleasure, and unroselike was the red :
‘Fasts wear thin the pride fantastic ;—one I left at home lacks bread.’

II.

Lady ! hard is the beginning — so they say — of shameless sinning :
Ah but, loss disguised in winning, easier grows it day by day,
May thy shamefaced, sinless pleading to the unhearing or the unheeding
Lacerate less an inly bleeding bosom ere those locks grow grey ;
Locks whose midnight once was lighted with the diamond’s changeful ray !

III.

Silks worn bare with work’s abusing ; cheek made wan with hailstorm’s bruising ;
Eye its splendour slowly losing ; state less stately in decay ;

Chanting ballad or old ditty year by year she roam'd
the city :

Love at first is kin to pity ; pity to contempt, men
say ;

Wonder lessen'd, reverence slacken'd, as the raven
locks grew grey.

IV.

What is that makes sadness sadder ? What is that
makes madness madder ?

Shame, a sharper-venomed adder, gnaws when looks
once kind betray !

'She is poor : the poor are common ! 'Twas a
countess : 'tis a woman ;

Looks she has at times scarce human : England !
there should be her stay :

'Twas for Charles the old lord battled—Charles and
England—so men say.'

V.

Charles ! Whitehall ! the wine, the revel ! No, she
sinks not to *that* level !

Mime or pander ; king or devil ; she will die on
Ireland's shore !

Ne'er, till Portsmouth's brazen forehead grows with
virtuous blushes florid

Will she pass that gate abhorrèd, climb that stair-
case, tread that floor ;

Let *that* forehead wear the diamond which Lord
Roche's widow wore !

VI.

Critic guest through Ireland wending, careless praise
with cavil blending,
Wonder not, in old man bending, or in beggar boys
at play,
Wonder not at aspect regal, princely front or eye of
eagle :
Common these where baying beagle, or the wire-
hair'd wolf-hound grey
Chased old nobles once through woodlands which the
ignoble made their prey.
Centuries three that sport renewed they—thrice a
century—so men say.

THE IRISH SLAVE IN BARBADOES.

BESIDE our shieling spread an oak,
Close by, a beech, its brother :
Between them rose the pale blue smoke ;
They mingled each with other.

The gold mead stretched before our door
Beyond the church-tower taper ;
The river wound into the moor
In distance lost and vapour.

Amid green hazels, cradle-swung,
Our babe with rapture dancing,
Watched furry shapes the roots among,
With beaded eyes forth glancing.

Ah, years of blessing ! Rich no more
 Yet grateful and contented,
 The lands that Stafford from us tore
 No longer we lamented.

So fared it till that night of woe
 When, from the mountains blaring,
 The deep horns rang ' The foe, the foe ! '
 And fires were round us glaring.

He went : next day our hearth was cold,
 Then came that week of slaughter :—
 I woke within the ship's black hold
 And heard the rushing water.

Ah ! those that seemed our life can die
 Yet we live on and wither !
 Fling out thy fires, thou Indian sky :
 Toss all thy torches hither !

Send, salt morass and swamps of cane
 Send forth your ambushed fever !
 O death, unstrain at last my chain
 And bid me rest for ever !

ARCHBISHOP PLUNKET.

(THE LAST VICTIM OF THE ' POPISH PLOT.')

JULY 11, A.D. 1681.

' The Earl of Essex went to the king (Charles II.) to apply for a pardon, and told his Majesty " the witnesses must needs be perjured, as what they swore could not possibly be true." But his Majesty answered in a passion, " Why did you not declare this, then, at the trial ? I dare pardon nobody—his blood be upon your head, and not mine ! "'—Haverty's *History of Ireland*. See also Cardinal Moran's *Life of Archbishop Plunket*.

WHY crowd ye windows thus, and doors ?
Why climb ye tower and steeple ?
What lures you forth, O senators ?
What goads you here, O people ?

Here there is nothing worth your note—
'Tis but an old man dying :
The noblest stag this season caught
And in the old nets lying !

Sirs, there are marvels, but not here :
Here's but the threadbare fable
Whose sense nor sage discerns, nor seer ;
Unwilling is unable !

That prince who lurk'd in bush and brake
While bloodhounds bay'd behind him
Now, to his father's throne brought back,
In pleasure's mesh doth wind him.

The primate of that race, whose sword
Stream'd last to save that father,
To-day is reaping such reward
As Irish virtues gather.

His Faith King Charles partakes—and hides !
Ah, caitiff crowned, and craven !
Not his to breast the rough sea tides ;
He rocks in peaceful haven.

Great heart ! Pray well in heaven this night
From dungeon loosed, and hovel,
For souls that blacken in God's light,
That know the Truth, yet grovel.

A BALLAD OF SARSFIELD;

OR, THE BURSTING OF THE GUNS.

A.D. 1690.

SARSFIELD rode out the Dutch to rout,
And to take and break their cannon ;
To mass went he at half-past three,
And at four he cross'd the Shannon.

Tirconnel slept. In dream his thoughts
Old fields of victory ran on ;
And the chieftains of Thomond in Limerick's towers
Slept well by the banks of Shannon.

He rode ten miles and he cross'd the ford,
And couch'd in the wood and waited ;
Till, left and right, on march'd in sight
That host which the true men hated.

'Charge !' Sarsfield cried ; and the green hill-side
As they charged replied in thunder ;
They rode o'er the plain and they rode o'er the slain,
And the rebel rout lay under !

He burn'd the gear the knaves held dear,
For his King he fought, not plunder ;
With powder he cramm'd the guns, and ramm'd
Their mouths the red soil under.

The spark flash'd out like a nation's shout
The sound into heaven ascended ;
The hosts of the sky made to earth reply
And the thunders twain were blended !

Sarsfield rode out the Dutch to rout,
And to take and break their cannon ;—
A century after, Sarsfield's laughter
Was echoed from Dungannon.

A BALLAD OF ATHLONE;

OR, HOW THEY BROKE DOWN THE BRIDGE.

Does any man dream that a Gael can fear ?
Of a thousand deeds let him learn but one !
The Shannon swept onward, broad and clear
Between the leaguers and worn Athlone.

' Break down the bridge ! ' Six warriors rushed
Through the storm of shot and the storm of shell :
With late, but certain, victory flushed
The grim Dutch gunners eyed them well.

They wrenched at the planks 'mid a hail of fire :
They fell in death, their work half done :
The bridge stood fast ; and nigh and nigher
The foe swarmed darkly, densely on.

' O who for Erin will strike a stroke ?
Who hurl yon planks where the waters roar ? '
Six warriors forth from their comrades broke
And flung them upon that bridge once more.

Again at the rocking planks they dashed ;
And four dropped dead ; and two remained :
The huge beams groaned, and the arch down-
crashed ;—
Two stalwart swimmers the margin gained.

St. Ruth in his stirrups stood up and cried,
‘I have seen no deed like that in France!’
With a toss of his head Sarsfield replied
‘They had luck, the dogs! ’Twas a merry chance!’
O many a year upon Shannon’s side
They sang upon moor and they sang upon heath
Of the twain that breasted that raging tide,
And the ten that shook bloody hands with Death!

THE REQUITAL.

I.

WE too had our day; it was brief: it is ended—
When a King dwelt among us; no strange King
but ours!
When the shout of a People delivered ascended
And shook the broad banner that hung on his
towers.
We saw it like trees in a summer breeze shiver;
We read the gold legend that blazoned it o’er:
‘To-day; now or never! To-day and for ever!’
O God, have we seen it to see it no more?

II.

How fared it that season, our lords and our masters,
In that spring of our freedom how fared it with
you?
Did we trample your Faith? Did we mock your
disasters?
We restored but his own to the leal and the true.

Ye had fallen? 'Twas a season of tempest and troubles :

But against you we drew not that knife ye had drawn ;

In the war-field we met ; but your prelates and nobles

Stood up 'mid the senate in ermine and lawn !

THE LAST MAC CARTHMORE.

ON thy woody heaths, Muskerry—Carbery, on thy famish'd shore,

Hands hurl'd upwards, wordless wailings, clamour for Mac Carthymore !

He is gone ; and never, never shall return to wild or wood

Till the sun burns out in blackness and the moon descends in blood.

He, of lineage older, nobler, at the latest Stuart's side

Drew once more his father's sword for Charles in blood of traitors dyed :

Once again the stranger fattens where Mac Carthys ruled of old,

For a later Cromwell triumphs in the Dutchman's muddier mould.

Broken boat and barge around him, sea-gulls piping loud and shrill,

Sits the chief where bursts the breaker, and laments the sea-wind chill

In a barren northern island dinn'd by ocean's endless
roar

Where the Elbe with all his waters streams between
the willows hoar.

Earth is wide in hill and valley ; palace courts and
convent piles

Centuries since received thine outcasts, Ireland, oft
with tears and smiles :

Wherefore builds this grey-hair'd Exile on a rock-
isle's weedy neck ?

Ocean unto ocean calleth ; inly yearneth wreck to
wreck !

He and his, his Church and Country, King and kins-
men, house and home,

Wrecks they are like broken galleys strangled by the
yeasty foam :

Nations past and nations present are or shall be soon
as these—

Words of peace to him come only from the breast of
raging seas.

Clouds and sea-birds inland drifting o'er the sea-bar
and sand-plain ;

Belts of mists for weeks unshifting ; plunge of de-
vastating rain ;

Icebergs as they pass uplifting aguish gleams
through vapours froze,

These, long years, were thy companions, O thou last
Mac Carthymore !

When a rising tide at midnight rush'd against the
downward stream

Rush'd not then the clans embattled meeting in the
Chieftain's dream ?

When once more that tide exhausted died in murmurs towards the main
Died not then once more his slogan, ebbing far o'er hosts of slain ?

Pious river ! let us rather hope the low monotonies
Of thy broad stream seaward toiling and the willow-bending breeze
Charm'd at times a midday slumber, tranquillised tempestuous breath,
Music last when harp was broken, requiem sad and sole in death.

A HUNDRED YEARS ;

OR, RELIGIO NOVISSIMA.

THERE is an Order by a northern sea,
Far in the West, of rule and life more strict
Than that which Basil reared in Galilee,
In Egypt Paul, in Umbria Benedict.

Discalced it walks ; a stony land of tombs
A strange Petraea of late days, it treads !
Within its court no high-tossed censer fumes ;
The night-rain beats its cells, the wind its beds.

Before its eyes no brass-bound, blazon'd tome
Reflects the splendour of a lamp high-hung :
Knowledge is banish'd from her earliest home
Like wealth : it whispers psalms that once it sung.

It is not bound by the vow celibate
Lest, through its ceasing, anguish too might cease ;

In sorrow it brings forth ; and Death and Fate
Watch at Life's gate, and tithe the unripe in-
crease.

It wears not the Franciscan's cord or gown ;
The cord that binds it is the Stranger's chain :
Scarce seen for scorn, in fields of old renown
It breaks the clod ; another reaps the grain.

Year after year it fasts ; each third or fourth
So fasts that fasts of men to it are feast ;
Then of its brethren many in the earth
Are laid unrequiem'd like the mountain-beast.

Where are its cloisters ? Where the felon sleeps !
Where its novitiate ? Where the last wolf died !
From sea to sea its vigil long it keeps—
Stern Foundress ! is its Rule not mortified ?

Thou that hast laid so many an Order waste,
A Nation is thine Order ! It was thine
Wide as a realm that Order's seed to cast,
And undisputed sustain its discipline.

QUOMODO SEDET SOLA.

How sits the City lonely and uncrowned ;
(Thus the old Priests renewed that Hebrew song) *
She sits a widowed queen in weepings drowned ;
Her friends revile her who should mourn her wrong.

Behold, her streets are silent and her gate ;
And as the sea her sorrows are increased,

* ' The Lamentations. '

The Daughter of my People, desolate ;
And no man mounteth to her solemn feast.

To them that brought her comfort she hath said,
‘ My children strove, and each by each is slain :
I turned from Him to Whom my youth was wed :
Therefore the heathen hosts my courts profane.

‘ The bruised reed He brake not ; neither cried,
Nor strove, nor smote : He set the prisoners free :
But sons of mine oppressed His poor, and lied,
Nor walked in judgment and in equity.’

Thus sang the Priests, and ended, ‘ Christ was led
Lamb-like to death. His mouth He opened not :
He gave His life to raise from death the dead :
That God Who sends our penance shared our lot.’

SPES UNICA.

I.

BETWEEN two mountains’ granite walls one star
Shines in this sea-lake quiet as the grave ;
The ocean moans against its rocky bar ;
That star no reflex finds in foam or wave.

II.

Saints of our country : if—no more a Nation—
Vain are henceforth her struggles, from on high
Fix in the bosom of her desolation
So much the more that Hope which cannot die !

SEDERUNT IN TERRA.

‘THE Lord hath spread His net about her feet
And down hath hurled her wall in heaps around ;’
Thus sang her Elders, as their breasts they beat,
Her virgins with their garlands on the ground.

‘The head of Sion to the dust is brought :
Her Kings are slain or scattered by the sword :
Her ancient Law is made a thing of nought :
Her Prophets find not Vision from the Lord.

‘Because they showed thee not thy sin of old,
Servants this day have lordship o’er thy race :
From thine own wells thou draw’st thy drink for
gold ;
And Gentile standards mock thy Holy Place.

‘Thy little children made an idle quest—
“Where—where is bread?” As wounded men
they lay
In every street. Upon their mothers’ breast
At last they breathed their souls in death away.’

The Priests made answer, ‘Christ on Olivet
Prayed to His Father. Pray thou well this day.
His chalice passed Him not. Therefore thy debt
Is cancelled. Watch with Him one hour, and pray.’

DEEP CRIETH UNTO DEEP.

I.

BESIDE that Eastern sea—there first exalted—

Thus sang, not Bard, but Priest, ‘The Cross lies
low!’

Sad St. Sophia, ’neath thy roofs gold-vaulted

Who kneels this hour? the blind and turban’d
Foe!

II.

O Eire! a sister hast thou in thy sorrow!

If thine the earlier, hers the bitterer moan:

She weeps to-day; great Rome may weep to-
morrow!

Claim not that o’er-proud boast—to weep alone.

ADHÆSIT LINGUA LACTANTIS.

‘Thy woes have made thy heart as iron hard:

Lo! the sea-monsters yield their young the breast;
But thou the gates of thine increase hast barred;
And scorn’st to grant thine offspring bread or rest.

‘Thy lordly ones within thy womb conceived

And nursed in scarlet, wither is thy drouth;
The tongue of him, thy suckling babe, hath cleaved
To that dry skin which roofed his milkless mouth.

‘Put down thy lips into the road-side dust;

And whisper softly through that dust, and say,
“Although He slay me, yet in God I trust;
He made, and can re-make me. Let Him slay!”

‘ Behold ! to tarry for the Lord is good ;
His faithfulness for ever shall remain ;
His mercies as the mornings are renewed :
The man that waits Him shall not wait in vain.

‘ Within thy bones He made His fire to burn
That thou might’st hate the paths thy feet have
trod :
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return ;’
Thus sang the Priests. ‘ Thy refuge is thy God.’

THE PROMISE.

I.

As the church-bells rolled forth their sonorous Evan-
gel,
Their last ere the Stranger usurped the old pile,
I heard ’mid their clangour the voice of an Angel
Give words to that music which rushed o’er the
Isle :
‘ In thousand-fold echoes, thy God, unforsaking,
That peal shall send back from the heavenly
bourne :
O hearts that are broken, O hearts that are breaking,
Be strong, for the glories gone by shall return.’

II.

Thenceforth in the wood and the tempests that din it
In the thunder of mountains the moan of the
shore,
That chime I can hear and the clear song within it
The voice of that Angel who sings evermore,

‘The Faith shall grow vast though the Faithful grow
fewer ;

By sorrow uplifted ascendeth *their* Throne
Who resist the ill deed but not hate the ill-doer,
Who forgive, unpartaking, all sins but their own.’

Only a reed that sighed—

And the Poplar grove hard by
From a million of babbling mouths replied,
‘Who cares, who cares? Not I!’

Only a dove’s low moan—

And the new-gorged raven near
Let fall from the red beak the last white bone,
And answered, half croak, half sneer.

Only the Silk of the Kine

Far driven on the foot that bled ;
And only old Argial’s bleeding pine ;
And the Black Rose that once was red.

ODE.

THE CYCLIC RENOVATION.

I.

THE unvanquish’d Land puts forth each year
New growth of man and forest ;
Her children vanish ; but on her,
Stranger, in vain thou warrest !

She wrestles, strong through hope sublime,
Thick darkness round her pressing
Wrestles with God's great Angel; Time
And wins, though maim'd, the blessing.

II.

As night draws in what day sent forth
As Spring is born of Winter
As flowers that hide in parent earth
Re-issue from the centre,
Our Land takes back her wasted brood,
Our Land in respiration,
Breathes from her deep heart unsubdued
A renovated nation !

III.

A Nation dies : a People lives :—
Through Signs Celestial ranging
A Race's Destiny survives
Unchanged, yet ever changing :
The many-centuried Wrath goes by ;
But while earth's tumult rages
'In cœlo quies.' Burst and die
Thou storm of temporal ages !

IV.

Burst, and thine utmost fury wreak
On things that are but seeming !
First kill ; then die ; that God may speak,
And man surcease from dreaming !
That Love and Justice strong as love
May be the poles unshaken
Round which a world new-born may move
And Truth that slept may waken !

THE SPIRITUAL RENOVATION.

I.

THE Watchman stood on the turret :

He looked to the south and the east :

But the Kings of the south were sleeping,

And the eastern Kings at feast.

Not yet is thy help : not yet

Hast thou paid the uttermost debt :

Not reached is the worst, thou Weeper :—

Though thy feet—God meteth their tread—

Have dinted the green sea's bed,

There are depths in the mid sea deeper !

Not *all* God's waves and His billows

As yet have gone over thy head,

That Penance and Faith should be lords o'er Death,

And that Hell should be vanquishèd.

II.

I heard thine Angel that sighed

Three times, ' Descend to the deep.'

I heard at his side the Archangel that cried

' To the depth that is under the deep.'

Who made thee and shaped thee of old

It is He in the darkness that lays thee

With the cerements around thee ninefold ;

That Earth, when the waking is thine,

May look on His Hand divine,

And answer, ' None other might raise thee

III.

Noble, and Chieftain and Prince,

They were thine in thy day, and died :

The head and the members were scattered long
since !—

Shall a sinew, or nerve abide ?
So long as of that dead clay
Two atoms together cleave
God's trumpet that calls thee thou canst not obey,
His promise receive and believe.
So long as the seed, the husk,
The body of death, and the prison,
Holds out, undissolved, in the dusk
So long in his pains and his chains
The unglorified Spirit remains ;
The New Body unrisen.

A SONG OF THE BRIGADE.

The Irish Brigade, consisting originally of soldiers of James II., took service with more than one continental sovereign. In many a land it made the name of Ireland famous. The Brigade was recruited from Ireland till the latter part of the eighteenth century, and it is said that, from first to last, nearly 500,000 men belonged to it.

I SNATCHED a stone from the bloodied brook
And hurled it at my household door !
No farewell of my love I took :
I shall see my friend no more.

I dashed across the churchyard bound :
I knelt not by my parents' graves :
There rang from my heart a clarion's sound
That summoned me o'er the waves.

No land to me can native be
That strangers trample and tyrants stain :

When the valleys I loved are cleansed and free
They are mine, they are mine again !

Till then, in sunshine or sunless weather,
By Seine and Loire, and the broad Garonne,
My war-horse and I roam on together
Wherever God wills. On ! on !

A SONG OF THE BRIGADE.

RIVER that through this purple plain
Toilest—once redder—to the main
Go, kiss for me the banks of Seine ;

Tell him I loved, and love for aye,
That his I am though far away,
More his than on the marriage-day.

Tell him thy flowers for him I twine
When first the slow sad mornings shine
In thy dim glass ; for he is mine.

Tell him when evening's tearful light
Bathes those dark towers on Aughrim's height
There where he fought in heart I fight.

A freeman's banner o'er him waves !
So be it ! I but tend the graves
Where freemen sleep whose sons are slaves.

Tell him I nurse his noble race
Nor weep save o'er one sleeping face
Wherein those looks of his I trace.

For him my beads I count when falls
Moonbeam or shower at intervals
Upon our burn'd and blacken'd walls :
And bless him ! bless the bold Brigade—
May God go with them, horse and blade,
For Faith's defence, and Ireland's aid !

SONG.

I.

Not always the winter ! not always the wail !
The heart heals perforce where the spirit is pure !
The apple smells sweet in the glens of Imayle ;
The blackbird sings loud by the Slane and the
Suir !
There are princes no more in Kincora and Tara,
But the gold-flower laughs out from the Mague at
Athdara ;
And the Spring-tide that wakens the leaf in the
bud,
Sad Mother, forgive us, shoots joy through our
blood !

II.

Not always the winter ! not always the moan !
Our fathers, they tell us, in old time were free :
Free to-day is the stag in the woods of Idrone,
And the eagle that fleets from Loch Lene o'er the
Lee !
The blue-bells rise up where the young May hath
trod ;
The souls of our martyrs are reigning with God !
Sad Mother, forgive us ! yon skylark no choice
Permits us ! From heaven he is crying ' Rejoice ! '

A SONG OF THE BRIGADE.

A.D. 1706.

I.

WHAT sound goes up among the Alps !
The shouts of Irish battle !
The echoes reach their snowy scalps ;
From cliff to cliff they rattle !
In vain he strove—the Duke—Eugene :—
That flying host to rally :
The squadrons green, they swept it clean
Beyond Marsiglia's valley.

II.

Who fixed their standards on thy wall,
Long-leaguered Barcelona !
Unfallen, who saw the bravest fall ?
Reply, betrayed Cremona !
O graves of Sarsfield and of Clare !
O Ramillies and Landen,*
Their brand we bear : their faith we share
Their cause we'll ne'er abandon !

III.

Years passed : again went by the Bard
The law that banned him braving :
Where blood of old had stained the sward
Summer corn was waving :

* O'Brien, Lord Clare, fell at the battle of Ramillies, A.D. 1706 ; Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan, on the field of Landen, A.D. 1693. Catching in his hand the blood that trickled from his death-wound, he exclaimed, 'O that this had been for Ireland !'

The tempest of a sudden joy
Uplifting stave and stanza,
The valleys echoed 'Fontenoy,'
The wild sea-shore 'Almanza !'

THE SEA-WATCHER.

I.

THE crags lay dark in strange eclipse :
From waves late flushed the glow was gone :
The topsails of the far-off ships
Alone in lessening radiance shone :
Against a stranded boat a maid
Stood leaning gunwale to her breast,
As though its pain that pressure stayed :
Her large eyes rested on the west.

II.

'Beyond the sea ! beyond the sea !
The weeks, the months, the years go by !
Ah ! when will some one say of me
"Beyond the sky ! beyond the sky !"
And yet I would not have thee here
To look upon thy country's shame :
For me the tear : for me the bier :
For thee fair field, and honest fame.

THE FRIENDLY BLIGHT.

I.

A MARCH-WIND sang in a frosty wood
'Twas in Oriel's land on a mountain brown
While the woodman stared at the hard black bud,
And the sun through mist went down :
'Not always,' it sang, 'shall triumph the wrong
For God is stronger than man, they say :'
Let no man tell of the March-wind's song,
Till comes the appointed day.

II.

'Sheaf after sheaf upon Moira's plain,
And snow upon snow on the hills of Mourne !
Full many a harvest-moon must wane
Full many a Spring return !
The Right shall triumph at last o'er wrong :
Yet none knows how, and none the day :'
The March-wind sang ; and bit 'mid the song
The little black bud away !

III.

'Blow south-wind on through my vineyard blow !'
So pray'd that land of the palm and vine ;
O Eire, 'tis the north wind and wintry snow
That strengthen thine oak and pine !
The storm breaks oft upon Uladh's hills ;
Oft bursts the wave on the stones by Saul ;
In God's time cometh the thing God wills
For God is the Lord of all !

THE NEW RACE.

I.

O YE who have vanquish'd the Land and retain it,
How little ye know what ye miss of delight !
There are worlds in her heart, could ye seek it or
gain it,
That would clothe a true Noble with glory and
might.
What is she, this Isle which ye trample and ravage,
Which ye plough with oppression and reap with
the sword,
But a harp, never strung, in the hall of a savage
Or a fair wife embraced by a husband abhorr'd ?

II.

The chiefs of the Gael were the People embodied ;
The chiefs were the blossom, the People the root !
Their conquerors the Normans, high-soul'd, and high-
blooded,
Grew Irish at last from the scalp to the foot.
But ye ! ye are hirelings and satraps not Nobles !
Your slaves, they detest you ; your masters, they
scorn !
The river lives on ; but its sun-painted bubbles
Pass quick, to the rapids insensibly borne.

THE IRISH EXILE AT FIESOLE.

I.

HERE to thine exile rest is sweet :

Here, Mother-land, thy breath is near him !

Thy pontiff, Donat, raised his seat

On these fair hills that still revere him ;

Like him that thrill'd the Helvetian vale,

St. Gall's, with rock-resounded anthem :

For their sakes honour'd is the Gael :

The peace they gave to men God grant them !

II.

Far down in pomp the Arno winds

By domes the boast of old Religion ;

The eternal azure shining blinds

Serene Ausonia's queenliest region.

Assunta be her name ! for bright

She sits, assumed 'mid heavenly glories ;

But ah ! more dear, though dark like night,

To me, my loved and lost Dolores !

III.

The mild Franciscans say—and sigh—

'Weep not except for Christ's dear Passion !'

They never saw their Florence lie,

Like her I mourn, in desolation !

On this high crest they brood in rest,

The pines their Saint and them embowering,

While centuries blossom round their nest

Like those slow aloes seldom flowering.

IV.

‘Salvete, flores Martyrum?’

Such was the Roman Philip’s greeting
In banner’d streets with myrtles dumb
The grave-eyed English college meeting :
There lived an older martyr-land !

All realms revered her ; none would aid her ;
Or reaching forth a tardy hand
Enfeebled first, at last betrayed her !

V.

Men named that land a ‘younger Rome!’

She lit the north with radiance golden ;
Alone survives the Catacomb

Of all that Roman greatness olden !
Her Cathall at Taranto sate :
Virgilius ! Saltzburgh was thy mission !
Who sow’d the Faith fast long, feast late ;
Who reap’d retain unvex’d fruition.

VI.

Peace settles on the whitening hair ;
The heart that burned grows cold and colder ;
My Resurrection spot is there

Where those Etrurian ruins moulder.
Foot-sore, by yonder pillar’s base

My rest I make, unknown and lowly :
And teach the legend-loving race
To weep a Troy than theirs more holy.

WINTER SONG.

THE high-piled cloud drifts on as in scorn
Like a ghost, half pining, half stately,
Or a white ice-island in silence borne
O'er seas congeal'd but lately.

With nose to the ground like a wilder'd hound
O'er wood-leaves yellow and sodden
On races the wind but cannot find
One sweet track where Spring hath trodden.

The moor is black ; with frosty rime
The wither'd brier is beaded ;
The sluggard Spring hath o'erslept her time,
The Spring that was never more needed.

What says the oak-leaf in the night-cold noon,
And the beech-stock scoffing and surly ?
' Who comes too soon is a witless loon
Like the clown that is up too early.'

But the moss grows fair when the trees are bare,
The dumb year finds a pillow there ;
And beside it the fern with its green crown saith
' Best bloometh the Hope that is rooted in death.'

GAIETY IN PENAL DAYS.

BEATI IMMACULATI.

' THE storm has roar'd by ; and the flowers reappear
Like a babe on the battle-field born, the new year
Through wrecks of the forest looks up on the skies
With a smile like the windflower's, and violet eyes.

‘There’s warmth in the sunshine ; there’s song in
the wood : .

There’s faith in the spirit, and life in the blood ;
We’ll dance though the Stranger inherits the soil :
We’ll sow though we reap not ! For God be the
toil !

‘O Earth that renewest thy beautiful youth !
“The meek shall possess thee!” Unchangeable Truth !
A childhood thou giv’st us ’mid grey hairs reborn
As the gates we approach of perpetual morn !’

In the halls of their fathers an alien held feast ;
Their church was a cave and an outlaw their priest ;
The birds have their nests and the foxes have holes—
What had these ? Like a sunrise God shone in their
souls !

DIRGE.

I.

YE trumpets of long-buried hosts
Peal, peal no longer in mine ears !
No more afflict me, wailing ghosts
Of princedom quell’d and vanished years !
Freeze on my face, forbidden tears :
And thou, O heart whose hopes are dead
Sleep well, like hearts that sleep in lead
Embalmed ’mid royal sepulchres.

II.

The stream that one time rolled in blood
A stainless crystal winds to-day :

Fresh scions of the branded wood
 Detain the flying feet of May :
 The linnet chants 'mid ruins grey ;
The young lambs bound the graves among :—
O Mother-land ! he does thee wrong
 Who with thy playmates scorns to play.

UNA.

To the knee she stood 'mid rushes
 And the broad, dark stream swept by her :
Smiles went o'er her, smiles and blushes
 As the stranger's bark drew nigh her ;
Near to Clonmacnoise she stood :
Shannon past her wound in flood.

By her side a wolf-hound wrestled
 With a bright boy bold as Mars ;
On her breast an infant nestled
 Like to her, but none of hers ;
A golden iris graced her hand—
All her gold was in that wand.

O'er the misty, moorish margin
 Frown'd a ruin'd tower afar ;
Some one said, ' This peasant virgin
 Comes from chieftains great in war !
Princes once had bow'd before her :
Now the reeds alone adore her ! '

Refluent dropt, that bark on gliding,
 The wave it heaved along the bank :

Like worldings still with fortune siding
The reed-beds with it backward sank.
Farewell to her ! The rushing river
Must have its way. Farewell for ever !

DOUBLE-LIVED ;

OR, RACES CROWNED.

I.

BEFORE the award, in those bright Halls
That rest upon the rolling spheres,
Like kingly patriarchs God instals
Long-suffering Races proved by years ;
They stand, the counterparts sublime
Of shapes that walk this world of woe,
Triumphant there in endless prime
While militant on earth below.

II.

As earth-mists build the snowy cloud
So Spirits risen, that conquered Fate,
Age after age up-borne in crowd,
That counterpart Assumed create :
Some form the statue's hand or head :
Some add the sceptre or the crown :
Till the great Image, perfected,
Smiles on its mortal semblance down.

III.

There stand the Nations just in act,
Or cleansed by suffering, cleansed not changed :

They stand of martyr Souls compact,
Round heaven's crystalline bastions ranged.
Among those Gods Elect art thou,
My Country—loftier hour by hour !
The earthly Erin bleeds below :
The heavenly reigns and rules in power.

ADDUXIT IN TENEBRIS.

THEY wish thee strong : they wish thee great !
Thy royalty is in thy heart !
Thy children mourn thy widow'd state
In funeral groves. Be what thou art !

Across the world's vainglorious waste,
As o'er Egyptian sands, in thee
God's hieroglyph, *His* shade is cast,
A bar of black from Calvary.

Around thee many a land and race
Have wealth or sway or name in story ;
But on that brow discrown'd we trace
The crown expiatory.

DIRGE.

I.

O woods that o'er the waters breathe
A sigh that grows from morn till night ;
O waters with your voice like death,
And yet consoling in your might ;

Ye draw, ye drag me with a charm,
 As when a river draws a leaf,
 From silken court and citied swarm
 To your cold homes of peace in grief.

II.

In boyhood's pride I trod the shore
 While slowly sank a crimson sun
 Revealed at moments, hid once more
 By rolling mountains gold or dun :
 But now I haunt its marge when day
 Hath laid his fulgent sceptre by,
 And tremble over waters grey
 Long windows of a hueless sky.

IRISH AIRS

I.

ON darksome hills thy songs I hear :—
 Nor growths they seem of minstrel art
 Nor wanderers from Urania's sphere,
 But voices from thine own deep heart !
 They seem thine own sad oracles
 Not uttered by thy sons but thee,
 Like waters forced through stony cells
 Or winds from cave and hollow tree.

II.

From thee what forced them ? Futile quest !
 What draws to widowed eyes the tears ?
 The milk to Rachel's childless breast ?
 The blood to wounds unstaunched of years ?

Long cling the storm-drops—cling yet shake—
On cypress-spire and cedar's fan :
Long rust upon the guilty brake
The heart-drops of the murdered man.

HOPE IN DEATH.

I.

DESCEND, O Sun, o'er yonder waste,
O'er moors and meads and meadows :
Make gold a world but late o'ercast ;
With purple tinge the shadows !
Thou goest to bless some happier clime
Than ours ; but sinking slowly
To us thou leav'st a hope sublime
Disguised in melancholy.

II.

A Love there is that shall restore
What Death and Fate take from us ;
A secret Love whose gift is more
Than Faith's authentic promise,
A Love that says, ' I hide awhile
For sense, that blinds, is round you : '
O well-loved dead ! ere now the smile
Of that great Love has found you !

THE DECREE.

I.

HATE not the Oppressor ! He fulfils
Thy destiny decreed—no more :
What cometh, that the Eternal wills :
Be ours to suffer and adore.
O Thou the All-Holy, Thou the All-Just !
Thou fling'st Thy plague upon the blast :
We hide our foreheads 'mid the dust
In penance till the wrath be past.

II.

The nations sink, the nations rise
On the dread fount of endless Being,
Bubbles that burst beneath the eyes
Of Him the all-shaping and all-seeing.
Thou breath'st, and they are made ! Behold,
Thy breath withdrawn they melt, they cease :
Our fathers were Thy Saints of old,
O grant at last their country peace !

SAINT BRIGID OF THE LEGENDS.

A BARD SONG.

A SOFT child-saint she lit the shade
With brightness more than human :
Her little hand was soft, they said,
As any breast of woman.

Through ways bemired to haunts of woe
She sped, nor hindrance heeded :
Yet still her foot retained its snow ;
No stream her white robe needed.

It chanced one eve she moved, foot-bare,
Among the kine sweet-breathing,
With boughs the insect tribe to scare
Their hornèd foreheads wreathing.

Slowly on her their dark eyes grave
They rolled in sleepy pleasure
Like things by music charmed, and gave
Their milk in twofold measure.

That hour there passed a beggar clan
Through sultry fields on faring :
'Come drink,' she cried, 'from pail and pan !'
That small hand was unsparing.

In wrath her Mother near them drew :
Those pails that late held nothing,
Like fountains tapped foamed up anew
And buzzed with milk-floods frothing !

O Saint, the favourite of the poor,
The afflicted, weak, and weary !
Like Mary's was that face she bore :
Men called her 'Erin's Mary.'

In triple vision God to her
Revealed her country's story :
She saw the cloud its greatness blur
She saw, beyond, its glory !

Kildare of Oaks ! thy quenchless Faith,
Her gift it was : she taught it !
The shroud Saint Patrick wore in death,
'Twas she, 'twas she that wrought it !

Thus sang they on the sunburnt land
Among the stacks of barley ;
And singing, smiled, by breezes fanned
From Erin's dream-land early.

SAINT COLUMBA'S STORK.

A MINSTREL SONG.

COLUMBA dashed into the war :

Heart-stricken then for penance prayed :
' See thou thy native land no more : '—
The Hermit spake : the Saint obeyed.

He sailed : he reached an island green ;
Alone he clomb its grassy steep :
Though dimly, Eire could still be seen :
Once more he launched into the deep.

Iona's soil at last he trod ;
There, there once more, they say he mixed
His hymns of Eire with hymns of God
Standing with wide eyes southward fixed.

Three years went by. One stormy morn
He grasped a Monk that near him stood :
' Go down to yonder beach forlorn
O'er which the northward sea-mists scud.

‘There, bleeding thou shalt find ere long
A Stork from Eire that loves her well
Sore wounded by the tempest’s wrong :
Uplift and bear her to thy cell.

‘Three days that Stork shall be thy guest :
The fourth o’er yonder raging main
The exile, strong through food and rest,
Will seek her native Eire again.’

The Monk obeyed. The Stork he found,
And fed, three days. Those three days o’er
The exile, soaring, gazed around,
Then winged her to her native shore.

The Harper ended. Loud and shrill
They raised their shout and praised that Stork,
And praised the Saint that, exiled, still
Could sing for Eire ; for God could work.

THE GRAVES.

IN the Cambrian valleys with sea-murmurs haunted
The grave-yards at noontide are fresh with dawn-
dew ;

On the virginal bosom white lilies are planted
’Mid the monotone whisper of pine-tree and yew.

In the dells of Etruria, where all day long warbles
The night-bird, the faithful ’mid cloisters repose :
And the long cypress shadow falls black upon
marbles

That cool aching hearts like the Apennines’
snows.

In Ireland, in Ireland the wind ever sighing
Sings alone the death-dirge o'er the just and the
good ;
In the abbeys of Ireland the bones are round lying
Like blocks where the hewer stands hewing the
wood.

THE LONG DYING.

THE dying tree no pang sustains ;
But, by degrees relinquishing
Companionship of beams and rains,
Forgets the balmy breath of Spring :

From off the enringèd trunk that keeps
His annual count of ages gone
Th' embrace of Summer slowly slips :
Still stands the giant in the sun :

His myriad lips, that suck'd of old
The dewy breasts of heaven, are dry ;
His root remit the crag, the mould ;
Yet painless is his latest sigh :

He falls ; the forests round him roar ;—
Ere long on quiet bank and copse
Untrembling moonbeams rest ; once more
The startled babe his head down-drops :

But ah for one who never drew
From age to age a painless breath !
And ah the old wrong ever new !
And ah the many-centuried death

A BARD'S LOVE FOR ERIN.

I.

I THOUGHT it was thy voice I heard ;—
Ah no ! the ripple burst and died ;
Among cold reeds the night-wind stirr'd ;
The yew-tree sigh'd ; the earliest bird
Answer'd the white dawn far descried.

II.

I thought it was a tress of thine
That grazed my cheek and touched my brow ;—
Ah no ! in sad but calm decline
'Twas but my ever grapeless vine
Slow-waving from the blighted bough.

III.

O Eire, it is not ended ! Soon,
Or late, thy flower renews its bud !
In sunless quarries still unhewn
Thy statue waits ; thy sunken moon
Shall light once more the autumnal flood !

IV.

Memory for me her hands but warms
O'er ashes of thy greatness gone ;
Or lifts to heaven phantasmal arms,
Muttering of talismans and charms,
And grappling after glories flown.

V.

Tired brain, poor worn-out palimpsest !
Sleep, sleep ! man's troubles soon are o'er :—

When in dark crypts my relics rest
 Star-high shall flash my Country's crest,
 Where birds of darkness cannot soar !

UNREVEALED.

GREY Harper, rest !—O maid, the Fates
 On those sad lips have press'd their seal !
 Thy song's sweet rage but indicates
 That mystery it can ne'er reveal.

Take comfort ! Vales and lakes and skies,
 Blue seas, and sunset-girded shore,
 Love-beaming brows, love-lighted eyes,
 Contend like thee. What can they more ?

SHANID'S KEEP.

I.

A CONQUEROR stood upon Shanid's brow
 And, ' Build me aloft,' he cried,
 ' A castle to rule o'er the meads below
 From the hills to the ocean's side !'
 In green Ardineer, far down, alone
 A beggar girl sang her song,
 A sorrowful dirge for a roof o'erthrown
 And a fire stamped out by wrong.

II.

The beggar girl's song in the wind was drowned :
 A moment it lived : no more :

The Conqueror's castle went back to the ground,
Went back after centuries four :
The great halls crumbled from roof to moat ;
The grey Keep alone remains :
But echoes still of the girl's song float
All over the lonely plains.

SAINT BRIGID OF THE CONVENTS.

SHE looked not on the face of man :
Nor husband hers, nor brother :
But where she passed the children ran
And hailed that Maid their Mother !

In haste she fled soft mead and grove
For Virtue's region hilly :
They called her, 'mid the birds, the Dove,
Among the flowers, the Lily.

In woods of Oriel—Leix's vales—
Her convent homes she planted
Where Erin's cloistered nightingales
Their nocturns darkling chanted.

By many a Scottish moorland wide,
By many an English river,
Men loved of old their 'good Saint Bride ;'
But Erin loves for ever !

A sword went forth ; thy fanes they burn'd !
Sweet Saint, no anger fret thee !
There are that ne'er thy grace have spurned :
There are that ne'er forget thee !

Thus sang they while the autumnal glade
Exchanged green leaf for golden ;
And later griefs were lighter made
By thought of glories olden.

IN FAR LANDS.

I SEE, I see the domes ascend
O Seville, o'er thy Guadalquiver :
I see thy breeze-touched cypress bend ;
I hear thy moonlit palm-grove shiver :

I know that honour here to those
Who suffered for the Faith is given ;
I know, I know that earthly woes
Are secret blessings crowned in heaven :

But ah ! against Dunluce's crags
To watch our green sea-billows swelling !
And ah ! once more to hear the stags
In Coona's stormy oakwoods belling !

SAINT COLUMBA'S FAREWELL.

A MINSTREL SONG.

THE exiles gazed on headlands theirs no more,
Lough Swilly's mountain portals dimly seen :
Sing us that song Columba sang of yore
Then sang the Minstrel, 'mid the sad, serene.

Farewell to Aran Isle, farewell !

I steer for Hy : * my heart is sore :
The breakers burst, the billows swell
'Twixt Aran Isle and Alba's † shore.

Thus spake the Son of God, ' Depart !'
O Aran Isle, God's will be done !
By Angels thronged this hour thou art :
I sit within my bark alone.

O Modan, well for thee the while !
Fair falls thy lot, and well art thou !
Thy seat is set in Aran's Isle :
Northward to Alba turns my prow.

O Aran, Sun of all the West !
My heart is thine ! As sweet to close
Our dying eyes in thee as rest
Where Peter and where Paul repose !

O Aran, Sun of all the West !
My heart in thee its grave hath found :
He walks in regions of the blest
The man that hears thy church-bells sound !

O Aran blest, O Aran blest !
Accursed the man that loves not thee !
The dead man cradled in thy breast—
No demon scares him : well is he !

Each Sunday Gabriel from on high
For so did Christ our Lord ordain
Thy Masses come to sanctify
With fifty angels in his train.

* Iona.

† Scotland.

Each Monday Michael issues forth
To touch with blood each sacred fane :
Each Tuesday cometh Raphael
To bless the hearth and bless the grain

Each Wednesday cometh Uriel,
Each Thursday Sariel, fresh from God ;
Each Friday cometh Ramael
To bless thy stones and bless thy sod.

Each Saturday comes Mary,
Comes Babe in arm, 'mid heavenly hosts !
O Aran, near to heaven is he
That hears God's angels bless thy coasts !

The Minstrel sang, and ceased ; while women's tears
Shone, sunset-brightened, on pure cheeks and pale ;
And dreadful less became in children's ears
The hoarse sea-dirges, and the rising gale.

ARBOR NOBILIS.

I.

LIKE a cedar our greatness arose from the earth ;
Or a plane by some broad-flowing river ;
Like arms that give blessing its boughs it put forth :
We thought it would bless us for ever.
The birds of the air in its branches found rest ;
The old lions couched in its shadow ;
Like a cloud o'er the sea was its pendulous crest ;
It murmur'd for leagues o'er the meadow.

II.

Was a worm at its root? Was it lightning that
charr'd

What age after age had created?

Not so! 'Twas the merchant its glory that marr'd
And the malice that, fearing it, hated.

Its branches lie splintered; the hollow trunk groans

Like a church that survives desolations;

But the leaves, scatter'd far when the hurricane
moans,

For the healing are sent to the nations!

ST. COLUMBA OF THE LEGENDS.

A WEEK ere yet her Saint was born

Columba's mother prayed alone—

Thus sang the Bard on Ascension Morn—

Then the Angel of Eire before her shone.

He lifted a Veil snow-white, yet red

With Roses wrought around and around:

And 'These are the Wounds of Love,' he said.

'That heal the wounded, and wound hearts sound.

He dropped that Veil on her head; and lo!

A wind from God outstretched it wide;

And a golden glory suffused its snow;

And the heart of its Roses grew deeper dyed.

Like a cloud of dawn on the breeze it flew;

Yet it clung to her holy head the while;

It spanned the woods, and the headlands blue;

It circled and girdled with joy the Isle!

And this was a sign that, come what might,
In gloom or glory, in good or ill,
Columba's Gospel with love and light
Should clasp and comfort his Erin still :

A sign, and a pledge, and a holy troth
That hath not failed her, and never can ;
For God to Columba sware an oath
That Eire should be dear to the God made Man ;

More dear as the centuries onward rolled,
When her bread should be shame, and grief her
wine ;
And mantled more closely with fold on fold
Of healing radiance and strength divine.

Thus sang to the vanquished the Bard Maelmire,
As the tide swelled up on the grassy shore
And the smooth sea filled with the sunset's fire :
He sang ; and the weepers wept no more.

THE HERMIT'S COUNSEL.

I.

THUS spake the hermit : Count it gain,
The scoff, the stab, the freezing fear :
Expiate on earth thine earthly stain ;
The fire that cleanseth, find it here !
Nearest we stand to heavenly light
When girt by Purgatorial glooms :
That Church which crowns the Roman height
Three centuries trod the Catacombs !

II.

But when thy God His Hand withdraws,
And all things round seem glad and fair,
Unchallenged Faith, impartial laws,
And wealth and honour, then beware !
Beware lest sin in splendour deck'd
Make null the years of holy sighs,
And God's great People, grief-elect,
Her birthright scorning, miss the prize.

EVENING MELODY.

FRESH eve, that hang'st in yon blue sky
On breeze-like pinions swaying,
And leav'st our earth reluctantly
Departing, yet delaying !

Along the beach the ripples rake ;
Dew-drench'd the thicket flushes :
And last year's leaves in bower and brake
Are dying 'mid their blushes.

Is this the world we knew of yore,
Long bound in wintry whiteness
Which here consummates more and more
Its talismanic brightness ?

To music wedded well-known lines
Let forth a hidden glory :
Thus, bathed in sunset, swells and shines
Lake, woodland, promontory.

New Edens pure from Adam's crime
Invite the just to enter ;
The spheres of wrongfull Life and Time
Grow lustrous to their centre.

Rejoice, glad planet ! Sin and Woe,
The void, the incompleteness,
Shall cease at last ; and thou shalt know
The mystery of thy greatness !

CARO REQUIESCET.

Look forth, O Sun, with beam oblique
O'er crags and lowlands mellow ;
The dusky beech-grove fire, and strike
The sea-green larch-wood yellow :

All round the deep, new-flooded meads
Send thy broad glories straying ;
Each herd that feeds 'mid flowers and weeds
In golden spoils arraying :

Flash from the river to the bridge
Red glance with glance pursuing ;
Fleet from low sedge to mountain ridge,
Whatever thou dost undoing :

Kiss with moist lip those vapoury bands
That swathe yon slopes of tillage ;
Clasp with a hundred sudden hands
The gables of yon village :

But O, thus sharpening to a point
O, brightening thus while dying,
Ere yet thou diest the graves anoint
Where my beloved are lying !

Ye shades that mount the moorland dells
Ascend, the tree tops dimming ;
But leave those amethystine hills
Awhile in glory swimming !

THE SECRET OF POWER.

DARK, dark that grove at the Attic gate
By the sad Eumenides haunted
Where the Theban King in his blindness sat
While the nightingales round him chanted !

In a grove as dark of cypress, and bay
Upgrown to a forest's stature
In vision I saw at the close of day
A Woman of godlike feature.

She stood like a Queen, and her vesture green
Shone out as a laurel sun-lighted ;
And she sang a wild song like a Mourner's *keen*
With an Angel's triumph united.

She sang like one whose grief is done ;
Who has solved Life's dread enigma ;
A beam from the sun on her brow was thrown
And I saw there the conquering Stigma.

EVENING MELODY.

O THAT the pines which crown yon steep
Their fires might ne'er surrender !
O that yon fervid knoll might keep
While lasts the world, its splendour !

Pale poplars on the breeze that lean
And in the sunset shiver
O that your golden stems might screen
For aye yon glassy river !

That yon white bird on homeward wing
Soft-sliding without motion
And now in blue air vanishing
Like snow-flake lost in ocean

Beyond our sight might never flee,
Yet forward still be flying,
And all the dying day might be
Immortal in its dying !

Pellucid thus in saintly trance
Thus mute in expectation
What waits the Earth ? Deliverance ?
Ah no ! Transfiguration !

She dreams of that 'New Earth' divine
Conceived of seed immortal ;
She sings 'Not mine the holier shrine,
Yet mine the steps and portal !'

THE 'OLD LAND.'

I.

AH, kindly and sweet, we must love thee perforce !

The disloyal, the coward alone would not love thee :

Ah, Mother of heroes ! strong Mother ! soft nurse !

We are thine while the large cloud swims onward
above thee !

By thy hills ever-blue that draw Heaven so near ;

By thy cliffs, by thy lakes, by thine ocean-lull'd
highlands ;

And more—by thy records disastrous and dear,

The shrines on thy headlands, the cells in thine
islands !

II.

Ah, well sings the thrush by Lixnaw and Traigh-li !

Ah, well breaks the wave upon Umbhall and
Brandon !

Thy breeze o'er the upland blows element and free

And o'er fields, once his own, which the hind must
abandon.

A caitiff the noble who draws from thy plains

His all, yet reveres not the source of his greatness ;

A clown and a serf 'mid his boundless domains

His spirit consumes in the prison of its straitness.

III.

Through the cloud of its pathos thy face is more fair :

In old time thou wert sun-clad ; the gold robe thou
worest !

To thee the heart turns as the deer to her lair

Ere she dies—her first bed in the gloom of the
forest.

Our glory, our sorrow, our Mother ! Thy God
In thy worst dereliction forsook but to prove thee !
Blind, blind as the blindworm ; cold, cold as the clod
Who seeing thee see not, possess but not love thee !

TO ETHNEA READING HOMER.

Alh, happy he who shaped the words
Which bind thee in their magic net ;
Who draws from those old Grecian chords
The harmonies that charm thee yet !

Who waves from that illumined brow
The dark locks back ;—upon that cheek
Pallid erewhile as Pindan snow
Makes thus the Pindan morning break !

'Tis he that fringes lids depress'd
With lashes heavier for a tear
And shakes that inexperienced breast
With womanhood. Upon the bier

Lies cold in death the hope of Troy ;
Thou hear'st the Elders sob around,
The widow'd wife, the orphan'd boy,
The old grey King, the realm discrown'd.

Hadst thou but lived that hour by thee
Well wept had been the heroic dead ;
The heroic hands well kissed ; thy knee
Had propp'd the pallid princely head !

From thee Andromache had caught
Dirges more sweet ; and she who burn'd
With self-accusing grief shame-fraught
A holier woe from thee had learn'd !

Ah child ! Thy Troy in ruin lies
Like theirs ! Her princes too are cold :
Again Cassandra prophesies
Vainly prophetic as of old.

Brandon to Ida's cloudy verge
Responds. Tirawley's kingless shore
Wails like the Lycian when its marge
Saintly Sarpedon trod no more.

Not Gods benign, like Sleep and Death
Who bore that shepherd-monarch home
But famine's tooth and fever's breath
Our exiles hunt o'er ocean's foam.

Peace reigns in heaven. The Fates each hour
Roll round earth's wheel through darkness vast :
Alone survives the Poet's power,
A manlike Art that from the past

Draws forth that line whose sanguine track
The wicked fear, the weak desert ;
That clue which leads through centuries back
The patriot to his Country's heart.

GRATTAN.

I.

GOD works through man, not hills or snows !

In man, not men, is the godlike power ;
The man, God's potentate, God foreknows ;

He sends him strength at the destined hour :
His Spirit He breathes into one deep heart :
His cloud He bids from one mind depart :
A Saint !—and a race is to God re-born !
A Man ! One man makes a Nation's morn !

II.

A man, and the blind land by slow degrees
Gains sight ! A man, and the deaf land hears !
A man, and the dumb land like wakening seas
Thunders low dirges in proud, dull ears !
A man, and the People, a three days' corse,
Stands up, and the grave-bands fall off perforce ;
One man, and the nation in height a span
To the measure ascends of the perfect man.

III.

Thus wept unto God the land of Eire :

Yet there rose no man and her hope was dead :
In the ashes she sat of a burn'd-out fire ;

And sackcloth was over her queenly head.
But a man in her latter days arose ;
A Deliverer stepp'd from the camp of her foes :
He spake ; the great and the proud gave way,
And the dawn began which shall end in day !

THE SECRET JOY.

O, BLITHESOME at times is life perforce
When Death is the gate of Hope not Fear ;
Rich streams lie dumb ; over rough stones course
The runlets that charm the ear.

‘ Her heart is hard ; she can laugh,’ men say ;
‘ That light one can jest who has cause to sigh !’
Her conscience is light ; and with God are they
She loves : they are safe—and nigh.

God’s light shines brightest on cheeks grief-pale !
The song of the darkling is sad and dark :
That proud one boasts of her nightingale !
O Eire, keep thou thy lark !

INSIGHT.

SHARP stretch the shades o’er the sward close-bitten
Which the affluent meadows receive but half ;
Truth lies clear-edged on the soul grief-smitten
Congeal’d there in epitaph.

A vision is thine by the haughty lost ;
An Insight reserved for the sad and pure :
On the mountain cold in the grey hoar frost
Thy Shepherd’s track lies sure !

SONG.

THE Little Black Rose * shall be red at last !

What made it black but the East wind dry
And the tear of the widow that fell on it fast ?
It shall redden the hills when June is nigh !

The Silk of the Kine * shall rest at last !

What drave her forth but the dragon-fly ?
In the golden vale she shall feed full fast
With her mild gold horn, and her slow dark eye.

The wounded wood-dove lies dead at last :

The pine long-bleeding, it shall not die !
—This song is secret. Mine ear it pass'd
In a wind o'er the stone-plain of Athenry.

THE CLUE.

To one in dungeons bound there came,
The last long night before he died,
An Angel garlanded with flame
Who raised his hand and prophesied :

‘Thy life hath been a dream : but lo !
This night thine eyes shall see the truth :
That which thou thoughtest weal was woe ;
And that was joy thou thoughtest ruth.

‘Thy Land hath conquer'd through her loss ;
With her God's chief of Creatures plain'd,

* Mystical names applied to Ireland by her Bards.

The same who scaled of old the Cross
When Mary's self beneath remain'd.*

'Thou fought'st upon the righteous side :
Yet, being dust, thou wroughtest sin :
Once—twice—thy hand was raised in pride :
The Promised Land thou may'st not win ;

'But they, thy children, shall.' Next morn
Around the Patriot-martyr press'd
A throng that cursed him. He in turn,
The sentenced, bless'd them—and was bless'd.

*ODE ON THE FIRST REPEAL OF THE
PENAL LAWS.*

A.D. 1778.

I.

THE hour has struck ! at last in heaven
The golden shield an Angel smites !
On Erin's altars thunder-riven
A happier Destiny alights.
'Tis done that cannot be undone
The lordlier ages have begun ;
The flood that widens as it flows
Is loosed ; fulfilled the Triple Woes !

II.

Once more the Faith uplifts her forehead
Star-circled to the starry skies :

* Dante's description of Holy Poverty.

Fangless at last, a snake abhorred,
 Beneath her foot Oppression lies :
 Above the waning moon of Time
 The Apparition stands sublime
 From hands immaculate, hands of light
 Down scattering gifts of saintly might.

III.

Long for her martyrs Erin waited :
 They came at last. Rejoice this hour
 Ye tonsured heads, or consecrated
 That sank beneath the stony shower !
 Thou Land for centuries dark and dumb
 Arise and shine ! thy light is come !
 Return ; for they are dead their knife
 Who raised, and sought the young child's life.

IV.

Again the wells of ancient knowledge
 Shall cheer the thirsty lip and dry :
 Again waste places, fane and college,
 The radiance wear of days gone by !
 Once more shall rise the Minster porch ;
 Once more shall laugh the village church
 O'er plains that yield the autumnal feast
 Once more to industry released !

V.

Once more the far sea-tide returneth
 And feeds the rivers of the Land :
 Once more her heart maternal yearneth
 With hopes the growth of memories grand.
 Immortal longings swell her breast
 Quickened from dust of Saints at rest :

Once more six centuries bud and flower
To share the triumph of this hour !

VI.

Who was it called thee the Forsaken ?
A consort judged ? a Wife put by ?
He at whose nod the heavens are shaken
'Tis He Who hails thee from on high.
'I loved thee from of old : I saved :
Upon My palms thy name is graved :
With blood were sealed the bridal vows ;
For lo, thy Maker is thy Spouse !'

VII.

Who, who are those like clouds of morning
That sail to thee o'er seas of gold ?
That fly, like doves, their exile scorning,
To windows known and loved of old ?
To thee the Isles their hands shall raise ;
Thy sons have taught them songs of praise ;
And Kings rebuild thy wall, or wait
Beside thy never-closing gate.

VIII.

As from the fig-tree, tempest-wasted
The untimely fruitage falleth crude,
So dropp'd around thee, blighted, blasted
Age after age thy sentenced brood.
To thee this day thine own are given :
Yet what are these to thine in heaven ?
They left thee in thy years of pain :
Thy cause they pleaded—not in vain.

IX.

Those years are o'er : made soft by distance
Old wars like war-songs soon will seem,
The aggression dire, the wild resistance
Put on the moonlight of a dream.
Ah, gentle Foes ! If *wholly* past—
That Norman foe was friend at last !
Like him, the ill deed redress, recall—
In Erin's heart is room for all.

THE CAUSE.

I.

THE Kings are dead that raised their swords
In Erin's right of old ;
The Bards that dash'd from fearless chords
Her name and praise lie cold :
But fix'd as fate her altars stand ;
Unchanged, like God, her Faith ;
Her Church still holds in equal hand
The keys of life and death.

II.

As well call up the sunken reefs
Atlantic waves rush o'er
As that old time of native chiefs
And Gaelic Bards restore !
Things heavenly rise : things earthly sink :
God works through Nature's laws ;
Sad Isle, 'tis He that bids thee link
Thine Action with thy Cause !

MEMORY.

‘THEY are past, the old days : let the past be forgotten :

Let them die the old wrongs and old woes that
were ours

Like the leaves of the winter down-trampled and
rotten

That light in the spring-time the forest with
flowers.’

So sings the sweet voice ! But the sad voice
replieth ;

‘Unstaunch’d is the wound while the insult re-
mains ;

The Tudor’s black banner above us still flieth ;

The Faith of our fathers is spurned in their fanes !

‘ Distrust the repentance that clings to its booty !

Give the people their Church and the priesthood
its right :

Till then, to remember the past is a duty,

For the past is our Cause, and our Cause is our
might.’

ALL-HALLOWS ; OR, THE MONK’S DREAM.

A PROPHECY.

I.

I TROD once more that place of tombs :

Death-rooted elder full in flower

Oppress’d me with its sad perfumes,

Pathetic breath of arch and tower :

The ivy on the cloister wall
 Waved, gusty with a silver gleam :
 The moon sank low : the billows' fall
 In moulds of music shaped my dream.

II.

In sleep a funeral chant I heard
 A ' De profundis ' far below ;
 On the long grass the rain-drops stirr'd
 As when the distant tempests blow :
 Then slowly, like a heaving sea,
 The graves were troubled all around ;
 And two by two, and three by three,
 The monks ascended from the ground.

III.

From sin absolved, redeem'd from tears
 There stood they, beautiful and calm,
 The brethren of a thousand years
 With lifted brows and palm to palm !
 On heaven they gazed in holy trance ;
 Low stream'd their beards and tresses hoar :
 And each transfigured countenance
 The Benedictine impress bore.

IV.

By Angels borne the Holy Rood
 Encircled thrice the church-yard bound ;
 They paced behind it, paced in blood,
 With bleeding feet, but foreheads crown'd ;
 And thrice they breathed that hymn benign,
 Which angels sang when Christ was born ;
 And thrice I wept, ere tower or shrine
 Had caught the first white beam of morn.

V.

Down on the earth my brows I laid ;
 In these, His Saints, I worshipp'd God :
 And then return'd that grief which made
 My heart since youth a frozen clod :
 ' O ye,' I wept, ' whose woes are past
 Look round on all these prostrate stones !
 To these can Life return at last ?
 Can Spirit lift once more these bones ?'

VI.

The smile of him the end who knows
 Went, luminous, o'er them as I spake ;
 Their white locks shone like mountain snows
 O'er which the orient mornings break :
 They stood : they pointed to the West :
 And lo ! where darkness late had lain
 Rose many a kingdom's citied crest
 Reflected in a kindling main !

VII.

' Not only these, the fanes o'erthrown,
 Shall rise,' they said, ' but myriads more ;
 The seed, far hence by tempests blown,
 Still sleeps on yon expectant shore.
 Send forth, sad Isle, thy reaper bands !
 Assert and pass thine old renown :
 Not here alone—in farthest lands
 For thee thy sons shall weave the crown.'

VIII.

They spake ; and like a cloud down sank
 The just and filial grief of years ;

And I that peace celestial drank
 Which shines but o'er the seas of tears.
 Thy Mission flashed before me plain,
 O thou by many woes anneal'd !
 And I discern'd how axe and chain
 Had thy great destinies sign'd and seal'd !

IX.

That seed which grows must seem to die :
 In thee, when earthly hope was none,
 The heaven-born hope of days gone by
 By martyrdom matured, lived on ;
 Conceal'd, like limbs of royal mould
 In some Egyptian pyramid,
 Or statued shape 'mid cities old
 Beneath Vesuvian ashes hid.

X.

For this cause by a power divine
 Each temporal aid was frustrated :
 Tyrone, Tirconnell, Geraldine—
 In vain they fought ; in vain they bled :
 Successive, 'neath th' usurping hand
 Sank ill-starr'd Mary ; erring James :
 Nor Spain nor France might wield the brand
 Which, for her own, Religion claims !

XI.

Arise, long stricken ! mightier far
 Are they who fight for God and thee
 Than those that head the adverse war !
 Sad prophet ! lift thy face and see !
 Behold, with eyes no longer wrong'd
 By mists the sense exterior breeds,

The hills of heaven around thee throng'd
With fiery chariots and with steeds !

XII.

The years baptized in blood are thine ;
The exile's prayer from many a strand ;
The woes of those this hour who pine
Poor aliens in their native land ;
Angels and Saints from heaven down-bent
Watch thy long conflict without pause ;
And the most Holy Sacrament
From all thine altars pleads thy cause !

XIII.

O great through Suffering, rise at last
Through kindred Action tenfold great !
Thy future calls on thee thy past
Its *soul* survives to consummate !
Let women weep ; let children moan :
Rise, men and brethren, to the fight :
One cause hath Earth, and one alone :
For it, the cause of God, unite !

XIV.

Let others trust in trade and traffic !
Be ours, O God, to trust in Thee !
Cherubic Wisdom, Love Seraphic,
Beseech that land the Truth makes free.
The earth-quelling sword let others vaunt ;
Such toys allure the youth, the boy :
Be ours for loftier wreaths to pant,
The Apostles' crown of Faith and Joy !

XV.

Hope of my country ! House of God !
 All-Hallows ! Blessed feet are those
 By which thy courts shall yet be trod
 Once more as ere the spoiler rose :
 Blessed the winds that waft them forth
 To victory o'er the rough sea foam :
 That race to God which conquers earth
 Can God forget that race at home ?

HYMN.

ECCLESIA DEI.

I.

Who is She that stands triumphant
 Rock in strength upon the Rock,
 Like some city crown'd with turrets
 Braving storm and earthquake shock ?
 Who is she her arms extending ;
 Blessing thus a world restored ;
 All the anthems of creation
 Lifting to creation's Lord ?
 Hers that Kingdom, hers the Sceptre !
 Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
 Hers that Truth whose fruit is freedom ;
 Light her yoke ; her burden sweet.

II.

As the moon its splendour borrows
 From a sun unseen all night

So from Christ, the Sun of Justice,
Draws His Church her sacred light.
Touch'd by His her hands have healing,
Bread of Life, absolving Key :
Christ Incarnate is her Bridegroom ;
The Spirit hers ; His Temple she.
Hers the Kingdom, hers the Sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that Truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

III.

Empires rise and sink like billows ;
Vanish and are seen no more ;
Glorious as the star of morning
She o'erlooks their wild uproar :
Hers the Household all-embracing,
Hers the Vine that shadows earth ;
Blest thy children, mighty Mother !
Safe the stranger at thy hearth.
Hers the Kingdom ; hers the Sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that Truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

IV.

Like her Bridegroom, heavenly, human,
Crown'd and militant in one,
Chanting Nature's great Assumption
And the Abasement of the Son,
Her magnificats, her dirges
Harmonise the jarring years ;
Hands that fling to heaven the censer
Wipe away the orphan's tears.

Hers the Kingdom, hers the Sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that Truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

ELECTA.

I.

THE Hour must come. Long since, and now
The shaft decreed is on the wing :
Loosed from the Eternal Archer's bow
The flying fate shall pierce the ring :
The Hour that comes to seal the right ;
The Hour that comes to judge the wrong ;
To lift the vales, and thunder-smite
Those cliffs the full-gorged eagles throng.

II.

Rejoice, Elect of Isles ! Rejoice
Pale image of the Church of God !
Like her afflicted, lift thy voice
Like her, and hail, and hymn the rod !
Thou warr'st on earth : at each new groan
In heaven thy Guardian claps his hands ;
And glitters o'er the expectant Throne
A crown inwoven of angel bands !

SONG.

I.

WHILE autumn flashed from woods of gold
Her challenge to the setting sun
And storm-clouds, breaking, seaward rolled
O'er brightening waves, their passion done,
The linnets on a rain-washed beech
So thronged I saw not branch for bird :
My skill is scant in forest speech
But thus they sang or thus I heard.

II.

'Twas all a dream—the wrong, the strife,
The scorn, the blow, the loss, the pain !
Immortal Gladness, Love and Life
Alone are lords by right and reign :
The Earth is tossed about as though
Young Angels tossed a cowslip ball ;
But, rough or level, high or low,
What matter ? God is all in all.

THE CHANGE.

I.

WAS it Truth ; was it Vision ? The old year was
dying ;
Clear rang the last chime from the turret of stone ;
The mountain hung black o'er the village low-lying ;
O'er the moon, rushing forward, loose vapours
were blown ;

When I saw an angelical choir with bow'd faces
 Wafting on, like a bier, upon pinions outspread
 An angel-like Form that of death had no traces :—
 Without pain she had died in her sleep ; but was
 dead.

II.

Was it Truth ; was it Vision ? The darkness was
 riven ;
 Once more through the infinite breast of pure
 night
 From heaven there looked downward, more beauteous
 than heaven,
 A visage whose sadness was lost in its light :—
 ' Why seek'st thou, my son, 'mid the dead for the
 living ?
 Thy Country is risen, and lives on in thy Faith ;
 I died but to live ; and now, Life and Life-giving,
 Where'er the Cross triumphs I conquer in death.'

SEMPER EADEM.

I.

THE moon, freshly risen from the bosom of ocean,
 Hangs o'er it suspended, all mournful yet bright ;
 And a yellow sea-circle with yearning emotion
 Swells up as to meet it, and clings to its light :
 The orb unabiding grows whiter, mounts higher ;
 The pathos of darkness descends on the brine :
 O Erin ! the North drew its light from thy pyre :
 Thy light woke the nations ; the embers were
 thine !

II.

Tis sunrise ! The mountains flash forth ; and, new-
 redde'n'd,

The billows grow lustrous, so lately forlorn ;
From the orient with vapours long darken'd and
 deaden'd

The trumpets of Godhead are pealing ' the Morn !'
He rises, the Sun, in his might re-ascending ;

Like an altar beneath him lies blazing the sea !
O Erin ! Who proved thee returns to thee, blending
The future and past in one garland for thee !

EPILOGUE.

WITH spices and urns they come : ah me, how sorrow
 can babble !

Nothing abides save Love ; and to Love comes
 gladness at last ;

Sad was the legend yet sweet ; though its truth was
 mingled with fable ;

Dire was the conflict and long ; but the rage of
 the conflict is past.

They are past, the three great Woes ; and the days
 of the dread Desolation ;

To amethyst changed are the stones blood-stain'd
 of the temple-floor :

A Spiritual Power she lives who seem'd to die as a
 Nation ;

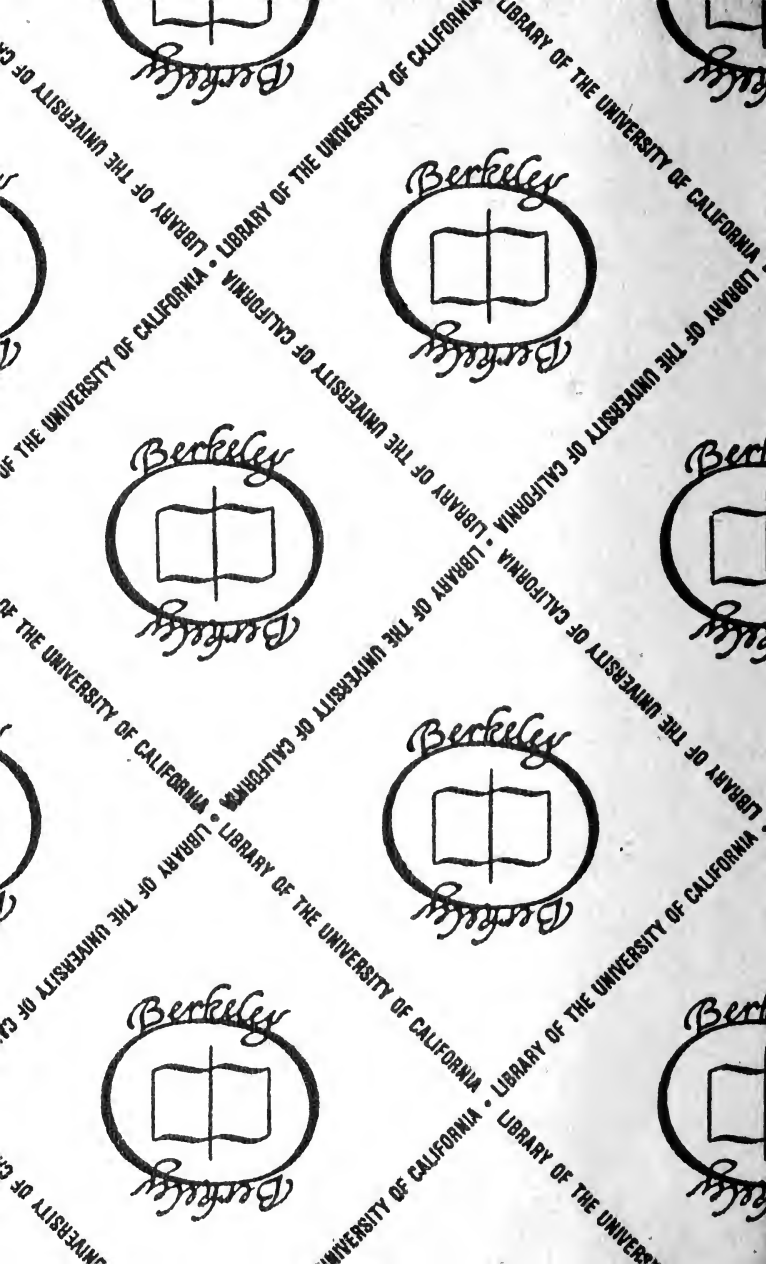
Her story is that of a Soul :—and the story of Earth
 is no more.

Endurance it was that won ; Suffering, than Action
thrice greater ;

For Suffering humbly *acts*. Away with sigh and
with tear !

She has gone before you and waits : She has gifts for
the blinded who hate her ;

And that bright Shape by the death-cave in music
answers, ' Not here.'



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